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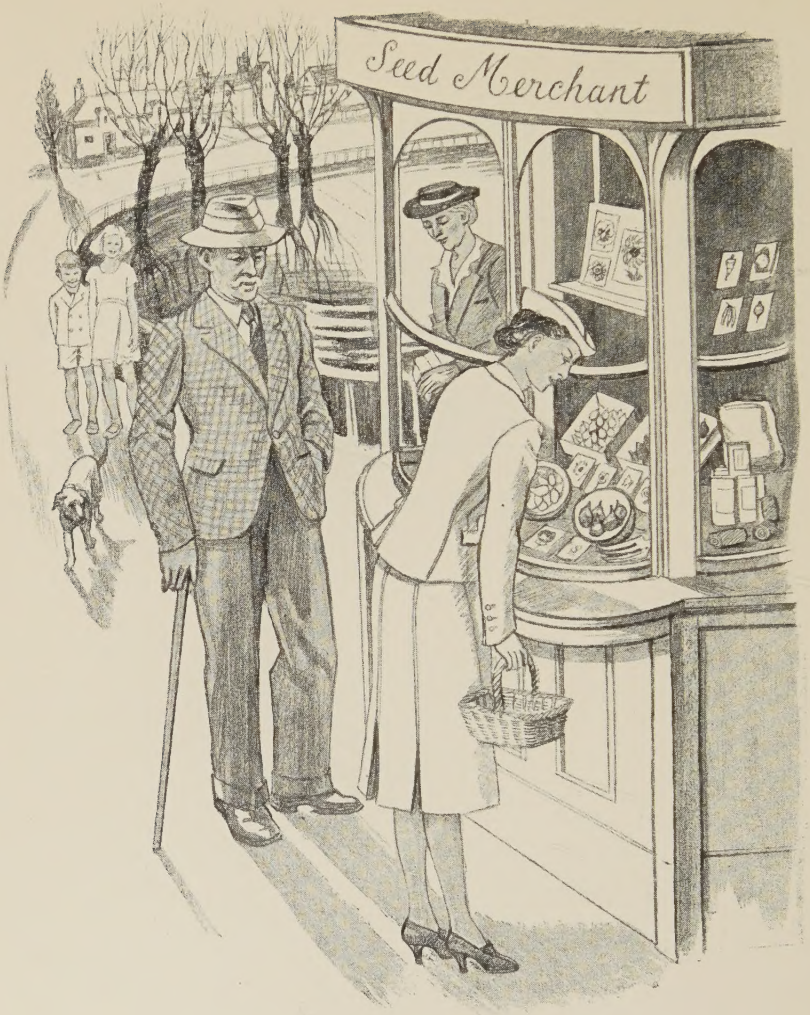

"I paused before an enticing array in the seed shop window".

Eve's Garden

by

Gladys Rawson

Illustrations by

Irene Hawkins

London
W. H. and L. Collingridge, Ltd.
148-149 Aldersgate Street, E.C. 1

"There is no spot of ground, however arid, bare, or ugly, that cannot be tamed into such a state as may give impression of beauty and delight."—GERTRUDE JEKYLL, *Home and Garden.*

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The Author's Preface

A LADY said to me the other day, "The ordinary book runs through a chemistry training for feeding each kind of plant (not to mention the kitchen garden) simplified somewhat by the jobbing gardener leaving you nothing whatever in your garden to feed. Still, one likes to play about even with the weeds he does not remove." And I have frequently been asked if I knew of a book written specially for the woman who tends her own garden or is at the mercy of the jobbing gardener.

Something not too technical, not too lyrical, not specialising in one branch of horticulture, but a book to help the average woman who likes pottering about in her garden over her little, or sometimes baffling, difficulties. It should contain sufficient knowledge to arm her in her verbal battles with the gardener, cover a wide field of interest, and try to suit all women and yet be presented in a form which is easy to digest without, on the other hand, being overfull of descriptive adjectives.

Bearing in mind that it is impossible to please everyone, I have nevertheless done my best to cover the ground marked out for me in a manner which I hope will appeal to women, and as far as possible I sincerely hope that I have succeeded. Perhaps I may add that if the book manages to reach a standard that meets the approval and claims a little interest from the husbands of the lady gardeners for whom it is written they have my permission to make use of any grains of serviceable information they may glean from its pages.

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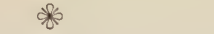
Eve's Garden

"So now do I commend you, and me, and all of us, to the keeping of a happy and humble spirit, such as the love of a garden ought surely to engender."—
REGINALD FARRER, 1909.

Eve's Garden



Chapter One

A PIECE OF GROUND—THE GARDEN-TO-BE

FOUR years ago I decided I had had enough of town; the noise and dust seemed to become noisier and dustier every day, so I said to myself, "After all, why should I?" and as there was no good answer I bought a small house and garden in the country.

The other houses, few and far between, were decently clothed by rampant foliage, so restful after close contact with staring walls of brick and stone.

"But why did you call it 'The Ashes'?"

"Well, I could not call it 'Kozy Kot' or 'Mum's Own,' and just a number is so bare and unromantic. The thing that made me decide on this garden was the beautiful weeping ash at the back; I felt that a tree like that would inspire me to build up an exquisite garden—a riot of colour all the year round, worthy setting of such a perfect specimen."

I don't think my friend considered "The Ashes" any better than "Kozy Kot," but was too polite to say so, especially as there was only one ash; but one cannot be literal *and* romantic, and I had come into the country for romance.

The house was quite small, intentionally so; all my time I resolved to spend making a "riot of colour" after the style of the cheering catalogue covers presented to me at the local flower show, and too many spare bedrooms (which would usually be full) seriously interferes with good work. As this book is concerned with the garden I will leave the house with that inadequate description, "The house was quite small."

You will no doubt gather from the foregoing remarks concerning catalogue covers that I was not exactly an experienced

gardener, but, having moved into my new home after Christmas, I bought all the gardening papers available at the village post-office-stationer-boot-and-shoe-grocery stores, and settled down before the fire to read how I ought to start.

I very soon found that to get flowers the following summer I should have started two years ago. When I looked out of the window through a curtain of rain at a large square of untouched field, only my weeping ash at the end of it persuaded me to remain in my new home and not go straight back to London.

In view of the state of my little share of the great wide world I felt I needed a helping hand and a good deal more muscle than I had at my command.

I consulted the good lady who came and did a little housework for me a few hours each day.

"Well now, you couldn't do better than 'ave my 'ubby. 'E do be 'andy with the spade and shears and would be right glad to work for 'ee. 'E works for Colonel Chilcott up at the big 'ouse, and only larst week the colonel come out and said 'e'd tidied up the garden so well with the shears it wouldn't be necessary to do any more clippin' for three years, so 'e'd better break up a bit more ground for cabbages."

There wasn't anything to cut back in the garden at present except a trellis of rambler roses down one side which seemed to have rather overdone the rambling, but certainly someone "'andy with a spade" was badly needed. That was how I came to have 'Erbert.

I think at this point a few words on suitable tools might be advisable. Nothing can be done without tools, but I found to my cost, in more senses than one, how easy it is to be carried away with enthusiasm at a flower show or in a large ironmonger's store with an array of green paint and bright metal before you, if you are not quite clear as to what essential tools you require. There are tools for every type of garden work, and plenty are made specially for ladies. It is fatally easy to find your tool-shed overflowing with strange implements, each designed for a type of work you are not engaged in, and you have to fall back on the old garden spade and fork for everything—entailing a real waste of time and energy.

After the first month, then, my shed was full, while my purse was depressingly empty, and at length there was nothing to be

done but to spread the array on the piece of field still untouched by 'Erbert and have a drastic thinning out.

Now, four years later, my stock of essential tools consists of:

List of Tools

Spade, approximately 9 inches by 6½ inches.
Fork, approximately 8 inches by 6 inches.
Rake, 1 foot wide.
Dutch hoe, 4 inches wide.
Mower, 11 inches wide (no iron roller).
Hand fork and trowel.
Shears, 10-inch blades.
Long-handled edging shears.
Turfing iron (or edging knife).
Birch broom.
Long pruners, 6 feet or 8 feet (fruit trees).
Lad's wooden wheelbarrow.

(This latter I would readily exchange for a sheet-iron barrow with rubber wheel.)

A pair of steps.

If a man is employed it is advisable to have an extra and heavier spade and fork, a 14-inch lawn mower, and garden roller. If there is a kitchen garden add a draw hoe of the swan-neck pattern.

Ribbed hose, plain nozzle and rose, with a rubber-flange endpiece that will attach to any tap.
¼-inch sieve, and one of larger mesh.

For the Greenhouse

Flower pots in various sizes, including "Thumbs" for small cuttings.
Long-spout watering-can (Haws' patent).
Scrubbing brush.
Long-handled scrubbing brush.
Large pail.
Thermometer.
2-inch labels.
Tins of fertiliser or plant food.

Box of charcoal.
Kitchen fork.
Stakes of neat, thin bamboo cane tips for supporting plants or their flower stems.

Sundries

Syringe, plain nozzle and rose, fairly heavy.
Tin of soft soap.
Small tin of paraffin.
4-inch labels.
Hammer and nails.
Rolcut secateurs and a good medium pruning knife.
Cheap pair of secateurs for dead wood.
Cheap penknife for string.
Good budding knife for propagating.
Ball fillis.
Ball of tarred twine.
Pruning saw with extra blades.

The first day "'Erbert" came to me we discussed the question of tools.

"Give me a good spade and prong, a barrer, a besom and stout shears and I don't want no more."

"What do you call a good spade, Herbert?" I asked.

He demonstrated the durability of his tool by thrusting it under the kitchen door and nearly wrenching it off its hinges.

"Don't bend, no matter wot you does to it," he explained simply. I assented eagerly and discouraged further testing. Together we chose "a good prong" (tested in the ironmonger's shop) and besom, but we had a slight argument over the barrow and shears.

"But I want to do a lot of gardening myself, and I can hardly lift this barrow even empty; as to the shears, I can clip nothing that is more than four feet high with those, as they seem specially weighted with lead," I explained.

"Well, there's no good choosing one o' they new-fangled metal barrers unless you have a rubber tyre, and that's expensive, Ma'am; they'd 'ear you barrowing over the crazy paving down at the station with the train coming in."

So we compromised over a "lad's barrow," large, wooden and light, and a pair of shears with long thin blades, sharply pointed.

I woke on the morning of "'Erbert's" next visit with a sense of impending doom. I had been dreaming there had been a gas attack and I had mislaid my gas mask; so feverishly had I been searching that I woke myself up, but the dream did not depart from me immediately.

I drew the curtains and looked out on to a smoking heap underneath the window. I dressed in double quick time and went to find Herbert. He was having "a bit o' lunch" behind the ash tree at nine o'clock in the morning.

"Herbert," I said, "where did that manure come from?"

"'Tis from my brother Tom's 'orses, Ma'am," he asserted. "'E do be the carrier round here and knew you'd want some; nothing won't grow 'ere without 'un."

"First of all," I replied, "my gardening paper says, 'Cow or pig for a light and horse manure for a heavy soil.' This is definitely sandy, isn't it?"

"Well, I don't know about that; I've 'ad Tom's 'orse manure in my own bit of ground five year come Christmas; I'll 'low 'tis 'efty clay; brother Tom's manure's good enough fur me, and 'e'll only charge you a pound a load, which is giving it away."

'In any case I really cannot have it stacked below my bedroom window."

"'Tain't no use barrering it t'other end o' ground and walking over all I dug to get at it. A lot o' barrering fur nuthing. There's no pleasing some folk, I reckon."

I did my best to smooth him down after I had made it clear that I would not have brother Tom's horse manure at a pound a load, and that I had ordered a load of pig manure from the butcher for ten shillings. I consulted the oracle on the laying out of the garden at this stage.

"I want lots of flowers, a riot of colour like you see on catalogue covers; those are photographs of the genuine thing, so there is no reason why we should not get the same result here."

"Ever occur to you, Mum, that they photos is taken of borders filled with plants that bloom all at one time; and mostly ten months of the year the borders 'ave no flowers?" I felt rather crushed.

"What are we to do to have plenty of colour, Herbert?"

"You 'ave a nice little bed front and back with a bit o' grass in the centre and make the rest a good kitchen garden; why, you could grow enough cabbages and spuds to supply the neighbour'ood 'ere, that you could," said he, gazing with yearning eyes down the garden.

"But I don't propose to supply the neighbourhood," I replied, "and not even myself if it means sacrificing my flowers. I want to have a huge herbaceous border, a large rose garden with lavender and a sundial, some flower beds dotted about, a rockery, some fruit trees, a few flowering shrubs, masses of spring bulbs everywhere, and a little patch for growing a lettuce or two and a few peas." Herbert's groan brought me back to earth.

"Rare waste of good ground, that be, Ma'am; still, it's your garden. Where's the lawn to be?"

A few weeks later he had scraped away the grass surface with the spade and stacked it at the other end of the ground. I was all impatience to have the garden dug over ready for planting, but there was no hurrying Herbert.

In the centre was a square portion of lumpy field still intact. "What is this for?" I enquired.

"That be your lawn, Ma'am," he asserted. "Cut 'en over with a scythe, and roll 'en once or twice and the mower will do the rest."

"Are you sure this field grass is the right kind of grass?" I asked. "What is lawn grass for?"

"That'll do you all right, Ma'am; don't want to bother relaying turf, you try it." So we tried it, and at the end of summer I had to buy a new mowing-machine.

When Herbert had finished taking off the grass, very slowly and deliberately he took out a shallow trench, which he proceeded to fill with manure. He then turned over the soil behind into the trench, which seemed to bristle with what looked like pieces of white string.

"Are those the roots of grass left behind?" I enquired.

"Yes, Ma'am, but I am digging them all in a foot deep; you won't 'ave no further trouble with they."

It seemed to me a most excellent idea at the time, and the ground looked so nice and brown and tidy when he had finished about six weeks later, but by May the garden was covered with a thick green carpet of the toughest grass I have ever encountered.

'Oh, Ma'am, the Vicar and 'is wife 'as called to see you'.

I have since learnt that couch grass buried experimentally six feet deep has still struggled to the surface; and so every bit is now burnt.

One afternoon soon after the digging had started I decided to tackle the trellis. I commenced by hacking off all the green shoots that were sticking out all over the place and catching hold of me every time I passed, and I was buried with the bird's nest in the centre when I heard a hurried whisper through the leaves.

"Oh, Ma'am, the Vicar and his wife 'as called to see you."

I fought my way out to find Mrs. Herbert somewhat breathless from running from the house and becoming more and more agitated as her eyes took in the result before her of a battle with a strong rambler rose. I am no beauty at the best of times, but at that moment I should have shuddered at my best friend finding me torn to pieces, oozing blood, and grasping a kitchen knife.

"Go and tell them I will be down in a minute when I have changed my overall, and get the tea meanwhile," I said, hoping I could become effectively inconspicuous in ten minutes.

"Oh, but how *charming* the garden is going to look, isn't it, George?" (I spun round to be confronted with a glimpse of a summer vision floating up the path in flowered voile, the Vicar trailing in the rear.) "And how *do* you do? I see you have been busy with the roses; such an *exhausting* job, I think, don't you? I always say to our man, 'Charles,' I say, 'I think it is time you did the rambler roses, they are getting untidy,' and he gets his secateurs and he does them. My friends always wonder how I manage to get so much gardening done, as I am really such a *busy* person."

I felt there was no use apologising, so I pushed back my hair, wiped my hands, hid the kitchen knife and tried to lead the way towards the house, and hot water. I had reckoned without the Vicar's wife, however.

"George and I thought you might like a few plants for your garden. George, dear, get them out of the car, will you? You will find them under the pile of books for the jumble sale. Don't shed soil all over the seat, and be careful not to let the dog out, and bring me in my bag, will you? But don't upset the cream cakes for Mrs. Willoughby; we must go there on the way back."

This followed George all the way to the gate, then she turned to me.

"But what a really delightful garden you will have; you must let me help you plan it out. I think a sunk lily pool with a bronze fountain, and a semicircular carved stone seat under the ash tree and—let me see—a pagoda. Oh yes, you *must* have a pagoda, particularly with so much Japanese news in the papers just now." I was praying for Mrs. Herbert to announce tea, but that was not to be just yet. George arrived back with the plants in a box (I never realised how uninspiring a plant looks in winter just dug out of the ground), and I falteringly indicated where I thought I might have some beds and borders.

This was the beginning of gifts of plants from neighbours who, on the slightest acquaintance or no acquaintance at all, were quite prepared to stock my entire garden for me. Coming straight from town, where I seldom spoke to people living in the same block of flats, this friendliness was very warming, and I began to glow with enthusiasm for my new life and my garden, and even Herbert seemed to wear a faint halo as he plodded methodically behind the barrow or gingerly pushed his spade halfway into the soil. I spent a happy time planting everything that was given to me as soon as Herbert had dug a patch, and soon I found he was wheeling his barrow over the plants, while I had nowhere to walk, as I had not thought of laying out the paths first of all.

"I knew 'ow it would be," commented Herbert. "Why didn't you stick to cabbages and taters instead of all this 'ere muck-up?" Nevertheless, the "muck-up" represented a riot of colour in the summer, and I was happy popping in plants as fast as they arrived and picturing myself forcing my way through a sea of blue and yellow, red and orange, and glowing purple.

Chapter Two

VICAR GEORGE LECTURES ME

IN the early summer, when everything had begun to sprout and grow so fast that I could almost see them shooting up before my eyes, I walked Herbert round the garden with me. We had had a few words over the rich growth of couch grass appearing as if by magic all over the garden.

"I want you to tell me what some of these plants are that I have had given me," I said.

"Could do that in two words," grunted Herbert. "You'll find they is mostly Micky Daisies and Montbretias. . . ."

Nevertheless, Vicar George proved to be a real friend to me. He taught me so much in a half-hour's chat that I have summarised the gist of his remarks and pass them on here.

"It is very hard beginning a garden when you know very little about gardening," said the Vicar. "Mistakes are frequently very expensive. You have seen what happens when you allow your gardener to dig in the couch grass, and the same applies to most of the tough weeds; those which hand-weed easily may safely be dug in providing they are not seeding.

"When you commence all over again (as you will have to do this autumn, remember) plan your ground roughly on paper first so that you can alter it if you feel another idea is better, without wasting time and labour. Secondly, remember that, as a general rule, herbaceous borders, if double, should run north and south; if single, should face south-east or south-west. Rockeries must have maximum sunlight and no tree drips. Shrubs may be planted in a north border with spring bulbs, and some of the lovely fringed and tasselled varieties of our hardy native ferns, many of which are as gracefully beautiful as their tender relatives which must be kept in a greenhouse.

"Thirdly, as far as possible plant certain groups of plants

together in one place. Thus keep your roses all together and herbaceous plants all together, and do not have roses in the border or herbaceous plants torn to pieces by thorns whenever the wind blows.

"Lastly, have as few paths as possible, and make them lead somewhere definite. Avoid straightness unless you decide to have a definitely formal garden, but if the paths wind or bend, be sure they wind or bend round something and do not bend with no obvious reason."

This was a good deal to take in all at once, but it helped me that winter to plan out a garden which everyone may not admire but with which I, personally, feel satisfied, as it is no longer a jumble or a jungle, but an ordered whole.

Another time he said: "Spend this summer in frequent visits to our nearest large nursery. Never mind about bedding plants or seeds, but make notes of the roses, shrubs, rock plants, and herbaceous plants you most admire, and jot down at what time of the year you see them in flower. When you receive them (particularly the herbaceous plants) in the autumn, plant them in such a way that you will not have a large area of border out of flower for a long period, but intersperse them according to their flowering time, so that when one kind finishes a near neighbour will contribute to a succession of bloom. Plant in groups of three or four of a kind, so that you will have a bold mass of colour at a time."

Oh! those April Showers

For some days April wept and wept, and I gazed through the streaming panes and wondered what had brought me into the country, and still more what had induced me to start a garden. Seldom have I witnessed anything more depressing.

"If you be going to take on the garden yourself, Ma'am"—Mrs. Ransom put down the laden tea tray—"there'll be times you'll be that glad to look out of the window and say, 'My back does ache from yesterday's weeding and I can't possibly go out in rain like this,' and sit by the fire with a nice book and the wireless."

"Perhaps you are right; anyway, it is the only thing to do after tea to-day, that is quite certain."

The next day, however, April took a brighter view of the world

in general, and after breakfast I strolled down the garden in search of 'Erbert. After looking in all the likely places, I tried the unlikely ones, and found him eventually behind the shed with his nose buried in the morning paper. "Just looking to see what the gardening bit has to say about seeds and pertaters," he explained, laying down the racing page.

"I have just brought you another aspect of gardening to consider," I remarked, laying in front of him a photograph of a quaint crazy path flanked with flowers and leading up to a bird bath at the end.

"That is what I want under the ash tree," I said, "and I want you to help me with the stone when it comes."

"Think I ain't enough to do, Ma'am, taking out all this 'ere couch without 'eaving 'eavy stone about? Last time I went to the doctor about my cough, 'e said, 'You must be careful with yourself, Ransom; don't do too much 'eavy work, or I won't answer for the consequences!' That's wot 'e said, Mum, that's 'is very words."

"I engaged you to help me with the heavy work, you know," I replied, but feeling, nevertheless, slightly uneasy (visions of galley slaves dropping dead at the oars), I went to consult his better half, who was humming her way up the stairs with the vacuum cleaner.

"Your husband tells me he cannot help me with the stone when it comes, as the doctor forbids him to do any lifting," I remarked, a trifle querulously, I am afraid.

"You don't want to take no notice of 'e, Mum; 'e only asked to work for you on Friday because 'e wanted a restful day before Saturday on 'is allotment—nothing wrong with 'is inside, 'e went to the doctor for 'is cough—not," she continued hastily, "that 'e works 'ard on Saturday; 'e meets 'is cronies there and they all gets a-jabberin' together, and 'e comes 'ome saying what a 'ard day 'e's 'ad. I gets on wi' me work; it pleases 'im to think 'e's overworked." And she hummed along the landing.

Armed with this information, I superintended the carrying in of the stone by the lorry man and a scowling and groaning Herbert. I accompanied the driver as he climbed into his cab.

"I suppose you will be bringing the rest of it this afternoon?"

"I thought you ordered a ton," he said. "Anyway, there it is"—and let in the clutch and drove off.

I surveyed nine pieces of stone, each about the size of a grand piano.

"What on earth am I to do with these?" I exclaimed.

'Erbert grinned. "Smash 'em up a bit," he commented, and stumped down the garden.

I 'phoned Vicar George; fortunately he was in.

"What am I to do with it?" I said after explanation. To my surprise, he proffered the same advice as 'Erbert. Feeling rather like a tenderfoot convict, I tapped away with my hammer; of course, no result. After ten minutes of this I had enough. I had just found the contractor's number in the telephone book prior to requesting him to remove the gravestones when George appeared at the gate. "I brought you a heavy coal hammer, as I thought you might not have one," he volunteered, returning what he rather unnecessarily termed my "toffee mallet" to me.

"That's all very well," I replied rather hotly (I was becoming decidedly irritable), "but look at those slabs, and tell me what on earth I am to do with them. There is supposed to be a ton there into the bargain."

"Now don't get so discouraged," he said soothingly. "First of all there *is* a ton here; secondly, you should have ordered medium-sized stone for a path three or four feet wide. It won't take long to turn this into medium stone," he said, propping one stone on the edge of another so that there was a hollow underneath. One sharp blow and the stone cracked in two.

"It's not strength, only knack," he said. "Get your man to prop up the stones for you and the slabs will soon begin to look like a ton when they are broken into manageable size.

"Where are you going to have the path?" was his next question. I showed him. "Leading up to the bird path under the ash tree, as you see it in the picture." (As the picture had come under the hammer by mistake it wasn't quite so enchanting as when it was first published, but he saw what I meant.) He offered to help me with it, but I felt he had already been so kind in coming round and I knew he was a busy man. "Not at all; thank you very much for your help, but I can put this down by myself perfectly well. You will see a great change when you pass this way again." I waved him on and set to work.

I pondered whether I should sink each stone in the soil or

place the stones on the ground and shovel soil between. By the time 'Erbert and I had reduced the grand pianos to manageable size I had decided on the latter.

"Bring me a barrow of soil, please, Herbert; I think one will be enough."

"Very good, Ma'am." And after the usual considerable pause (during which I made myself a cup of tea), 'Erbert appeared with the soil.

I took the spade and filled in between the first three stones and pressed it down. It oozed out of the sides. By the time three stones were firm the barrow was empty. By the time the path was finished there was a huge excavation at the bottom of the garden from which 'Erbert had protestingly dug ten barrow-loads of soil.

The next day I surveyed my handiwork and walked on the stones. Most of the soil had disappeared between the stones, and if I did not plant a foot in the centre of each they rose up and hit me.

We began all over again. I proceeded to dig out and sink the stones. When I had finished placing four I seemed to be all cluttered up with heaps of soil, odd stones and tools. The stones I had laid were buried and I could not therefore judge the level of the stones I was about to lay. There did not seem to be any room to stand myself.

I cleared away the soil and started again. I dug out three inches of soil all along the future path and placed it along the left-hand bed. I then laid the stones (placing surplus and unsuitable blocks and the tools on the right-hand bed). I then filled in with soil and hammered between each stone and compared it carefully with the level of the previous one as I went along. Here I may impart a piece of wisdom I have since acquired, relative to paving ground which is stiff and heavy. It is advisable in such circumstances to prick over the soil and add a good sprinkling of sand before laying down the stones, as they settle more firmly.

My soil is already light, however, and forking and adding sand was not necessary. In any case, like many other garden operations, it is best to work backwards and keep the laid stones swept clear of soil as you work; this way the path will eventually be level, but hard ramming between the blocks is essential.

I spent a considerable portion of the evening walking up and down the path after it was finished. I felt like a child with a new toy, even though my hands were sore and my back aching. The path, however (unlike the toy), I could not take to bed with me.

Chapter Three

SELECTING SEEDS—A COLONEL ASSISTS

WHEN I was living in London I had friends who were enthusiastic gardeners. Some were tactful and kept it to themselves—more or less—others were not. At regular intervals I worked hard to steer the conversation from carnations or sweet peas to spring hats, or from the Chelsea Show to the situation in Europe or the Far East, or anywhere except gardens and flower shows, before I became engulfed in a subject of which I knew practically nothing, and therefore relapsed into the rôle of listener, no more popular with me than with most other people. Nevertheless, it has been frequently impressed upon me that gardening, apart from being good for the health and an absorbing interest to so many women as well as males, brings to the surface aspects of character undreamt of by the possessor, and presents them as it were on a plate before her astonished eyes. I had only just commenced gardening, but already was beginning to have an uncomfortable feeling of not being nearly such a nice person as I had always fondly imagined myself to be.

I had taken it for granted that to turn a floriferous catalogue cover into reality was but the work of a month, more or less; to lay paths and turf lawns was but a question of time, with no particular ability necessary.

When, therefore, I found that a seemingly simple task of gardening did not turn out to be as easy and as straightforward as I thought, and I had to do the same thing two or three times to get it right, I passed through a spoilt-child stage which I thought I had left behind when I grew up. This gave place to a grim obstinacy as I passed a row of neat little gardens on my way to the village shops. A few days later I found myself saying, "You wait, just you wait till I have a garden, and I'll show

you what a garden *should* be like!" Not at all nice, you will agree.

Having finished my shopping, I paused before an enticing array in the seed shop window.

If you are not conversant with flowers it is, I think, quite impossible to tell what height or size a flower will be if the photograph or coloured picture on the packet is to be the guide. Frequently one dwarf flower is drawn the size of the packet, while the hollyhock in its entirety is photographed a hundred feet away. I don't know whether this peculiarity adds to the sale of the seeds or not, but it certainly causes the passer-by to pause and look more closely.

Anyway, having decided from these pictures that I would buy Browallia, Gloxinia, Delphinium and Lupin, a soft voice said, "Excuse me, aren't you the new owner of the house in the valley?" And I turned round and made the acquaintance of Colonel and Mrs. Chilcott.

"I have been watching you while my wife was in the post-office; peering at those packets. Never seen Asters and Nasturtiums in paper before? I thought a dog would lift your Sunday dinner any minute." And he laughed enough to make the windows rattle. There was no evading the Colonel; I realised that at once, so I tentatively pointed out my choice of annuals.

"God bless my soul, the woman wants a keeper," he ejaculated.

"Oh, Tom, don't say such dreadful things," meekly protested his wife.

"Have you got a warm greenhouse?"

"No."

"Do you want to wait two years for flowers?"

"No."

"Then why in thunder did you choose these?"

I confessed my ignorance.

"You want a bit of bright colour quick to make up for the weeping ash, I can see that." And he bore me into the shop.

"Let's eliminate most of the packets by putting on one side greenhouse plants, rock plants, most of the perennials and half-hardy annuals (known as H.H.A.; you really want a bit of glass to start those). Suggest a few perennials which can be coming on like Delphiniums and Lupins, always useful—a few plants to

fill the borders. Suggest some short-lived perennials like Coreopsis (marvellous flowers for the house vases)."

His words shot out like machine-gun fire while he turned over packet after packet.

"Gaillardia, Aquilegia (really perennials), always useful, also Agrostemma, Sweet Williams. Stocks and Calendulas—go on three or four years down here."

"I think you were looking for annuals to bloom this summer, weren't you?" interposed Mrs. Chilcott, turning to me.

"May just as well sow a few of these—save money in the end. She can have annuals as well—don't be silly"—rapidly filling a large, capable hand with rattling packets. "Let me see. Ah, yes. Shirley Poppy, Godetia (useful for sun-baked corners), Aster, Sweet Pea, Clarkia, Nigella, Cornflower, Nemesia. Do you like Mignonette?"

"Erm—yes, thank you."

"Right, Mignonette; and for short flowers, Nemophila, Dwarf Nasturtium, Phacelia. Ever seen Phacelia?"

"I don't somehow remember."

"Dark bluebells with white stamens, a row of Gentians for twopence. Cheap, eh? Well, I think that's all."

"Tom, don't you think a little Night-Scented Stock would be welcome? Just go on sowing a pinch of seed at intervals all the summer. You will never regret it."

"All right, I suppose you must trot out your hobby-horse. My wife seems crazy on scented flowers. Give me nice tidy beds that are a blaze of colour and a credit to the place. Anyway, here are the seeds, and you will be safe with these. Any fool can grow them."

"Oh, Tom, you do say such dreadful things."

"Sorry, no offence, no offence." I thanked him humbly and pushed the future flower garden against the Sunday joint in the basket, and we walked out together and shook hands.

"Come up and see our place—any time—delighted—tea, and show you round. Morning." He raised his hat and they were gone. I determined to accept their invitation. I was rather anxious to see how they produced a garden between them, since their individual tastes seemed to differ so completely. One of them must give way. The Colonel reminded me of an orange Dahlia or a scarlet Geranium, while his wife seemed like a pale

Columbine or Love-in-a-Mist, if one can compare people to flowers.

Still meditating on this subject, which promptly opened up endless possibilities (three or four cabbages occurred to me at once), I pushed open my gate and surveyed a row of plants laid neatly along the path.

One or two were already in flower. A chocolate-and-yellow Lupin, a Carnation (dark purple-red) and some unusual Irises, also a number of other plants I did not know. (Not surprising.)

"How kind people are!" I mused, bent double over the plants. "Everyone seems so anxious to help me. It *is* good of them. I wonder who sent these?"

Having deposited my basket in the kitchen, I went off in search of 'Erbert. In spite of Mrs. 'Erbert's assurance, I felt sorry for my poor little man toiling away with his fork to get every bit of couch grass out of the ground. The pile of white string was steadily growing, but there was still plenty more to come out.

I wondered if he minded the monotony of his job as much as I should have done.

I found him thoughtfully smoking his pipe and gazing at a lump of soil at his feet with a far-away look. Evidently he was having a rest. "Poor soul," I thought, "he shall help me with the seeds this afternoon; that will be much lighter work." I suggested that he should assist me after lunch, and then asked him if he knew who had left the row of plants inside the gate.

"'Tis like this, Ma'am. I felt real sorry for 'ee, I did, when I see'd the scrabble o' plants folk been givin' 'ee, so I thought I'd bring along a few real good 'uns I 'as down at my allotment for 'ee."

Poor Herbert, how I had been misjudging him! He had a heart of gold after all.

"Thank you very much indeed, Herbert, but I cannot accept them as a gift from you; they are such beautiful plants, you must let me pay for them."

"Well, Ma'am, of course, if you insist. You would never get as good under eighteenpence apiece, but if you give me a shilling for each of 'un I shan't 'ave robbed 'ee."

Silently I counted out twenty-five shillings. "Don't bring me any more, Herbert. I prefer to choose what I am buying myself."

In the middle of lunch there was a bang at the front door that

nearly made me swallow my fork. "I don't care if she's having fifty lunches or in her bath, I insist on seeing her." I opened the dining-room door (or I would have done if I had not been pushed back by the door-handle in my hand). In marched the Colonel in a rage. I have heard of Colonels in rages before; in fact, I believe they are noted for the warmth of them. Certainly this was the warmest I had yet encountered. Involuntarily I wondered if my hair was singed.

"May I ask how you come to be in possession of some of my plants without my permission? By Gad, Madam" (the china rattled), "because I advise you in a seed shop does not entitle you to give your man orders to lift plants out of my borders to stock your own. Do you think I don't recognise my chocolate Lupin or my "Sydney Crowhurst" Carnation, not to mention three of my best Irises, Grace Sturtevant, William Mohr and Mrs. Valerie West, and what looks remarkably like one of my best Pæonies?"

"Colonel Chilcott," I said a trifle coldly, "I had no idea these plants came from your garden, and I did not know that I gave an impression of dishonesty, but I assure you this matter shall be put right without further delay. My gardener, Ransom, shall deliver and replant them this afternoon. I apologise to you and wish you good-day."

"Ransom, did you say, Ransom? Might have known it—works for me—stocked my garden with a lot of rubbish I was fool enough to pay for when I first came here, and nearly cut down my hedge when I wasn't looking—never trust him loose with a pair of shears. If I'd known I would have told you to expect plants from me and the rest of the village any day."

He cooled down a little. I apologised.

"It never occurred to me that they came from someone else's garden. I knew he had an allotment, and the explanation seemed quite plausible."

"How much did you give him?"

"Twenty-five shillings."

"Well, they're worth that—keep them."

"Oh, but after this I couldn't dream——"

"Plenty more—should be glad—anyway, you've paid for them—scoundrel—cut down the hedge when I said three inches—icy blast all the winter, grows good vegetables, though—use-

ful mowing—blackguard—come round and see us—must go—give you some more plants in the autumn—apologise for rage—good-bye." And he strode off down the lane.

Herbert and I worked together in the front that afternoon; the only comment he made was, "Ain't no pleasin' some folk, I reckon."

"That will do, Herbert, the subject is closed."

We worked all the afternoon marking out the beds, and left a square patch for grass in the centre. While Herbert was forking over the ground I sorted out the packets of seed and placed two or three on each bed. I directed 'Erbert's activities to three beds and set to work on three myself.

After the first twenty minutes I realised that I should require at least ten packets for each bed. I put two twigs to mark the place where I had stopped, and turned to find 'Erbert had finished sowing his beds and had two packets left over.

A fortnight or so later 'Erbert's seeds all appeared like soldiers on the march—perfectly straight lines with a space between each.

"But, Herbert," I said, "this is a flower bed; you can't sow Cornflowers, Love-in-a-Mist and Mignonette in a straight row like cabbages. This isn't a kitchen garden."

"Like tidy, regular beds, I do; know what you've got. Some folk always critercising. Been gardening, man and boy, forty year come Michaelmas and still told what's what. Anyway, mine's come up; where's yours?" Herbert certainly had me there, and I was asking myself the same question a week later; then rather humbly I asked him how deep he had sown the seed.

"Only just to cover it, Ma'am," he replied.

Mine were buried inches deep. However, no one could complain of the result when at last they reached the surface. I had bought and sown the extra packets the same day, and the beds now looked like enormous baskets of mustard and cress. (I have since learnt that fine seed is more easily and evenly sown if mixed with a handful of dry soil first.)

Having sown it so deep, the seedlings were impossible to transplant; the moment I lifted them out of the ground they all lay down and were incapable of getting up again; their stems were long and yellow like strands of cotton.

I resowed the beds and replanted 'Erbert's soldiers into more

"Ain't no pleasin' some folk, I reckon."

informal groups and later on they all bloomed without further trouble.

I had read up a little about sowing lawns from seed, and with 'Erbert's contribution of sifted soil to finish with I got on splendidly with the little patch in the front till I used the back of my spade to firm down the soil. Each time I raised the spade soil and seeds stuck to the back of it and in five minutes my tiny lawn was pitted all over with jagged holes, exposing the seed to all the "fowls of the air." Herbert was no help except to suggest waiting till the soil was dry.

"'Tis the damp soil be sticking to the spade," he volunteered. I could have told him that myself. However, I found a most successful way of making soil firm for seed beds or even seeds in rows and trenches, and that is by holding the handle of the rake upright like a staff and prodding the ground with the head of the rake quickly and evenly all over. This has the added advantage of preventing the soil becoming "puddingy" owing to the open teeth of the rake.

After this I planted the chocolate Lupin, etc., on either side of the crazy path and a smother of Shirley Poppies round the back of the bird bath. Two months later I had to push my way between the luxuriant foliage of Lupins, Pæonies and Sunflowers (Helianthus "Étoile d'Or") planted close to the stone, while the "smother" never materialised owing to the darkness under the ash tree and the wealth of its roots. After a shower I had to wear a waterproof and gum-boots to go near the bird bath. I realise now why dwarf plants are put in the front of a border and why careful selection is needed to get any bloom at all underneath a tree.

Chapter Four

THE NEAT LITTLE MAN—AND DINAH

SOON after this I found that some of the village tradespeople who called at the house were feeling concerned at the loneliness of the life I was leading.

This point of view I must confess had not occurred to me; I had left the chaos of London and had chosen a peaceful bit of the country in which to settle down. Moreover, I had especially chosen a small house with no spare bedroom in order to be more or less on my own. I was touched by the kindly thought of the village shop-people, but I only discovered this in rather a roundabout way.

One morning Mrs. Ransom told me that the baker was at the back door and wished to see me if I could spare a moment. Rather wondering if I had omitted to settle an account, I went out to see him.

I was assured that the accounts were in order, that the bread was excellent quality, and that the weather might be worse, but, on the other hand, might be a great deal better. We then touched on the state of the country in general and farmers in particular, personal anecdotes were exchanged, and at long last we reached the core of the matter—namely, that he had heard that I was interested in gardening but knew nothing about it. He visited many enthusiasts on his round; and one in particular, hearing the sad tale of my ignorant efforts at gardening, wished me to know that he would be delighted to help me over any difficulties I might be experiencing if I would just call in any time I was passing.

In spite of my assurances that a number of kind people were helping me and that my garden was more or less held up till the winter (when I hoped we should have finished with the white string), he had evidently taken so much trouble on my behalf that I thanked him and promised I would call.

About a week later, therefore, I paid the promised visit.

The house was one of a row all alike, but the gardens were, of course, all different, and, having pushed open the gate belonging to my kind benefactor, I paused to take stock of the exquisite garden in miniature. Everything was in proportion, but all on such a small scale that the result was really a miracle of ingenuity.

There were two small half-moon beds set on either side of a tiny central pool. These were planted up with pink and yellow roses about eight inches high.

A grass path about eighteen inches wide containing small, sunk stepping-stones led past a miniature border. This border was carefully planted up with medium and dwarf plants and those of upright growth rather than the spreading or cushiony plants. It was about twenty feet long and four feet wide, but if looked at apart from the house (which made the garden seem almost as small as it was) it appeared twice its actual size. The fence was supporting a shower of white stars (Clematis montana), and under the house window I made the acquaintance of Gazania splendens—that magnificent orange daisy that commences to bloom with the May sunshine and continues till the frosts. Mauve ageratum edged the beds, and its neat purple tufts endeavoured to keep the sprawling, brilliant gazania within decent limits of luxuriance.

Along the remaining fence a careful selection of dwarf shrubs had been planted to continue the illusion of the magnifying-glass, and again the thin and upright had been chosen rather than the low and spreading.

As though the garden affected the owner, the door was opened by a small, dark neat little man. (I am sure, that is, he would have been neat when ready to go out.) Apparently he had just come in and was completing his toilet by wiping his hands on a towel as he opened the front door. A breath of the north assailed me.

"Eh, but you be the lady from t' 'Ashes.' Ah'm right glad to see thee; but Ah'm that ashamed that you found me like this. Annie, coom here, lass, 'tis lady from t' 'Ashes' come to see garden. This is my wife; do coom in, won't you?" And he whisked down the passage and disappeared.

Annie meanwhile quietly formed her own opinion of the

stranger as she motioned me to a seat in the sitting-room. Having satisfied herself, apparently, she made a few remarks about the weather, and then suggested a cup of tea.

What a marvellous institution the British cup of tea has proved to be. Not only is physical strength maintained by its tonic properties, but how many people have leant upon the fat, comfortable teapot for moral courage? My hostess, then, not being at all happy at being left alone with strangers, took refuge behind the teapot and bustled about placing cups and saucers, knives and plates, and apologising that there were only two whole fresh home-made cakes and some biscuits.

While she was thus engaged I asked her a few questions about her home in the North and what she thought about the South-country people. This seemed to put her more at her ease, but certainly her replies to the latter were hardly flattering.

At this point her husband appeared in the doorway accompanied by a four-footed friend.

"I would like to introduce you to a member of the family; she'll be glad to welcome you," he said. "Dinah, say 'How do you do to the lady.'" A pair of brown eyes smiled up at me, and as she sat down to shake hands her heavy tail thumped the floor.

"How do you do, Dinah?" I said seriously (because every dog should be a member of the family, and they like to be treated as such), and patted a broad, smooth head and held a heavy paw. After a moment she trotted back to her master, beamed at him, then came and laid her head on my knee. She had a very blunt nose, a permanent frown, and her head was like a ton weight, but she thumped her tail and grinned from ear to ear, so what could I do?

"Don't you take no notice; she's that spoilt she fair drips with sentiment," said her hard-hearted master. "Dinah, lie down." With an attitude of "See how I am treated here," she very slowly walked to the hearthrug and lay down.

"She's got a funny face, but she's most attractive," I said. "What breed is she? I don't think I've seen one before."

"Nay, but you don't see many about, and Ah'm sure Ah don't know why. She's a bull-mastiff, more bull than mastiff; that makes her not much bigger than a spaniel, and so gentle and sentimental. But she's also courageous and very strong" (I could

"What a marvellous institution the British cup of tea has proved to be."

believe that, looking at the broad chest and bulging muscles), "and you've no idea how she helps me in the garden. Eh, Ah wouldn't be without old Dinah."

"Dogs are not usually helpful in the garden," I said, trying to speak clearly with my mouth full of delicious home-made cake. "Most people spend a considerable time repairing damage when dogs of that weight run about on their own."

"We've just trained her kindly like to stick to paths and grass, and she has her own corner to bury her bones in, and woe betide Dinah if we dig up any in the beds. Eh, she knows all right. She's really very good; you'd be surprised."

"That's sensible training, but that doesn't explain how she is useful in the garden."

"Eh, but she knows names of tools like hoe, spade, fork, rake, the ones you use most, and when Ah'm at bottom of garden I just say, 'Dinah, spade,' and off she goes and brings me a spade."

"She's very strong, you know," Mrs. North-Country here chimed in. "She's that proud to be busy; it would make you laugh. Eh, but she's handy about garden is Dinah."

Refusing sternly further cups of tea and slices of cake, we went out into the garden. I had to ask firstly the names of the tiny roses, perfect in form and colour, in the two semicircular beds. "Those are 'Cecile Brunner' and 'Perle d'Or'—a little more expensive than ordinary bush or Polyantha roses, as they are a bother to propagate, but they're worth it, for all that."

"I've never seen them before, I think," I said, and made a mental note. "I plant crocuses between for spring," he added.

In the miniature border I was introduced to Veronica spicata, Campanula glomerata, Delphinium Bella Donna semi-plena, Aster acris nana, Viola cornuta, Armeria maritima, Eryngium violetta, Phlox Drummondii compacta, African Marigolds, fibrous-rooted Begonias, Cheiranthus linifolius, Cyclamen ibericum, Spirea filipendula plena and others.

These were not, of course, all in flower at the same time, but apparently many of them would flower over a long period and many short-lived flowers would appear again later on if the flower heads were removed almost before the final buds had opened. This applied to the cheiranthus, delphinium and the veronica in particular.

"We fill in with a few annuals like begonias, phlox, African

marigolds, and sometimes the cheiranthus, if cut right down, will go on another year, but it is really a biennial; personally I like the mauve linifolius better than the orange variety, C. Allioni, although this is grand for bedding."

We wandered round to the back garden, and he showed me a little greenhouse with tomato plants in neat rows down either side.

"Some folk grow them in pots and some in boxes. I prefer boxes, as I think they keep the roots moist and cool in hot weather, but pots, of course, last longer. I always put my boxes on a layer of soil, as you see, so that the roots can escape through the joints (the boxes are loosely joined) and wander into the soil. Tomatoes have to be grown at the beginning in a heated house, but later on are planted up in a cold greenhouse like this. They like a good loam, not too heavy, a little well-decayed manure, but not too much, some wood ashes saved from the bonfire and a little bonemeal. Tomatoes are among plants that do quite well, if not better, on artificial than on farmyard manure, so if I am short of old manure I mix together double the quantity of bonemeal and wood ashes. Later on I use nitrate of soda mixed with double the quantity of superphosphate and sulphate of potash. This mixture is dissolved at the rate of one ounce in a gallon of water and given once a week. There are also tomato fertilisers already mixed on the market, but personally I always prefer to mix my own."

I had to ask the reason of this, as it seemed to be so much more trouble than just buying a manure already conveniently mixed in a tin with full directions on a label. As a matter of fact, I do now buy what I want ready mixed, but it was interesting to hear his reasons.

"For one thing, I like to see the direct effect of a particular chemical on a plant, whereas with a ready-made fertiliser it is difficult to tell what chemical is mainly responsible for the plants doing well. Also in a mixed manure some of the chemicals will already exist in your own type of soil and are wasted, whereas there are not enough of the ones you haven't got.

"I find that when you want to encourage leaf growth a little extra nitrogen like nitrate of soda or sulphate of ammonia will have this effect, whereas when fruit is in question, or when the tomatoes have to be planted in a chalky or sandy soil, potash is required. This is sold as Kainit for digging in, but for liquid use sulphate of potash is better because it dissolves more quickly.

"Phosphatic manures for roots (this applies mainly in the kitchen garden) and for encouraging sturdy short-jointed growth. It is sold in the form of basic slag, which is very cheap, or as superphosphate, which is dearer but quicker to take effect.

"Another form, slow acting, is bonemeal, used a great deal for permanent pot plants and for grass. All this is put roughly, of course.

"'Little and often' is necessary in applying the chemicals I use, as they are rather strong. Of course, there are many others like potassium muriate and double superphosphate, but those others are the important fertilisers.

"These, more than farmyard manure, tend to make the soil sour. If you will come over here I will show you." Followed closely by Dinah, he led the way down the garden to a small border. The plants were much shorter than in the other borders, and there was a thin covering of moss over the soil.

"This I overlooked two years ago when I limed this side of the garden, and these plants are suffering from too much prolonged feeding, or indigestion. Lime disposes of excess acid as well as possessing the added virtue of making a clay soil better drained and a light soil stickier. Anyway, all these will be taken out and heeled in this autumn, and a good dressing of lime dug in and left till spring."

"What is 'heeling in'?" I asked, intrigued.

"Well, a trench is opened in a bit of vacant ground, deep enough to take the plant roots; they are laid on their sides, close together in a row, and the roots are covered with soil. They can be left all winter like that while you are remaking their beds."

"Can you do the same with bulbs, then, after they have finished flowering?" I asked. "I think they look so untidy."

"Certainly, provided you lift them carefully without breaking the roots, and it is better to put them in a slightly shady place."

I thanked both my newly made acquaintances profusely for all their kindness and their help to me, and we strolled back towards the house and the front gate. Just as I was reaching out my hand to open it he said:

"Eh! By gum, half a second, I nearly forgot." And disappeared, followed closely by Dinah.

"Never let's him out of her sight if she can help it," remarked Mrs. North-Country. "Never knew such a dog for

sticking to one person, and she seems to understand nearly everything he says."

At this moment he reappeared carrying in his arms a round small bundle.

"The baker told us you were all alone except for Mrs. Ransom, and 'tisn't right, we think, so we hoped you'd come round and see Dinah, and if you took a fancy to her you would accept one of her pups."

He put a smaller, rounder Dinah on the path, and the pup lifted up a funny wrinkled little face and whimpered. No one could have resisted him who was human at all. Dinah gave me a farewell paw at the gate and I hastened to banish her fears.

"It's all right, old girl," I whispered, "he will have a good home, don't you worry." And I bore away her son to his new home in the valley.

Chapter Five

DIVERSIONS—A PUPPY AND A CAR

MY gardening activities were somewhat interrupted at this stage owing to the introduction of "Beauty" into the household. In some ways the puppy's little wrinkled face and snub nose were so ugly that he just had to be called "Beauty," and "Beauty" he has remained.

From the time he wobbled across the threshold he demanded constant attention. Partly petting, partly food and drink, but mainly because he looked for his mother in the most unsuitable places. The cupboard under the stairs containing the dustpan and brushes seemed to have an irresistible attraction, and he was constantly shut in by mistake.

His genius for getting under people's feet made me discourage the kitchen as a permanent residence, particularly when I noted Mrs. Ransom's disapproving eye; however, soon even she began to melt beneath his unconscious puppy charm, and I often heard one-sided conversations issuing from the kitchen, which ceased abruptly when I appeared.

He grew at an amazing speed, and I must say she was really very patient with him, as his curiosity led him into strange places and extraordinary scrapes.

He was very responsive, however, to patient teaching, and in three or four months was sufficiently obedient already to be quite companionable, if a trifle exuberant.

'Erbert (who by this time had almost cleared the garden of couch grass) knew a man who had a kennel to sell: "Practically give it away, Ma'am; only wants two pounds for it." I learnt in time, however, that it had provided a fitting home for a cairn terrier, and felt therefore that it would hardly be suitable to house Beauty when he reached the full size and vigour of his doghood.

Towards the end of June the weather realised that according

to the calendar we should be in the middle of summer and obligingly turned on the best sort of summer weather.

It grew hotter and hotter. As I passed down the lane and along the village street I felt a longing to lie and read under big shady trees and picnic up on fresh-scented downs. Although my garden was certainly unique among all the gardens of the village for the time of year, a bare expanse of ground containing one path, one tree and a few seedlings does not contribute an ideal setting for rural meditation.

I decided, therefore, that I must procure a car of some sort to help me to enjoy the country and visit my widely scattered acquaintances and friends.

Beauty and I went up to town.

I cannot imagine to this minute why I took him. An energetic puppy of three months old in an hotel even for one night provides exercise and much embarrassment. He used up a certain amount of vitality on the way to the station and ceaseless activity going up. Having dismounted at Waterloo he promptly fell asleep in the middle of the station. I prodded and pushed him into the refreshment-room, where he fell asleep (little things like people falling over him did not wake Beauty) while I had tea.

In five minutes he had a trio of admiring waitresses round him, and with his characteristic desire to please (particularly ladies), he roused himself with a great effort to respond to their blandishments; when I rose to leave he promptly fell asleep.

We had varied experiences in the hotel, notably when he went down in the lift by mistake and then went quite frantic in the hotel dining-room on another floor looking for me. When, however, it came to choosing a car, the transaction lasted about five minutes. Beauty chose it and has considered it his own personal property ever since.

The salesman opened the door to demonstrate, Beauty leapt on the seat and sat bolt upright with a "Home, James," expression.

I apologised to him and explained that certain formalities had to be attended to and I could not drive him home there and then, but it took the united efforts of the salesman and myself to dislodge him, and he went about with an air of disillusionment for the rest of the day.

I quite realise that this is an unusual way of choosing a car,

but fortunately it happened to be also what I required, and his personal pride and possession in it came in very useful a year later when we spent a holiday by the sea.

I had left the car in a large piece of waste ground used as a car park in the centre of the town.

Beauty, in an ecstasy of splashing about in the sea, swam out so far after a ball which did not belong to him that he could not find me when he came to shore again, and set off to look for me. I hunted up and down the beach for him, and hot and worried returned at last to the car.

The car park was now quite full and I had some difficulty in finding my own; however, having located it at last, I found Beauty asleep. There was a large puddle of sea water, which had dripped off the running board on to the ground, and his face was covered with sand, but his joy at seeing me again compensated for the fearful mess he made of the inside of the car.

Remembering the advice of Vicar George, "Visit your local nursery two or three times during the summer," Beauty and I set out one day when it seemed that summer was just arriving for a large nursery a few miles away. It was a glorious day and a beautiful drive, and, having parked the car by the entrance, I set out to make the acquaintance of some new plants and shrubs, so that eventually I should have my garden planted up with specimens I most admired and which gave me the greatest pleasure to look at.

Hardly had I walked halfway down the main avenue when Beauty's dismal wail followed after me. I went back, and we had a few words. The next time I got a little further before the wail caught me up, and after the third time, and a rather drastic talking-to from me, he settled down to slumber and we have had no more bother since; in fact, if I cannot take him out of the car when I visit friends or go to the theatre or cinema he prefers being left in the car to remaining at home.

I was glad I had brought my notebook, as there were so many shrubs about to admire, and my memory is not particularly good at the best of times, as my friends will testify.

First I noticed Lilac (Syringa to a nurseryman, if you please), "Alphonse Lavallee," a double, and nearly blue, variety, Berberis atropurpurea (a berberis which keeps its deep purple foliage all the summer), and something which even I recognised

as an unusually fine double red May. The nurseryman cannot allow a good tree to live happily under such a simple name as May Tree. If you require one, ask for Cratægus Oxyacantha flore pleno coccinea. May is certainly shorter, but all the strange words are required to indicate that one refers to the double red variety.

Hippophæ rhamnoides is another shrub which took my fancy. This has long, shiny, pale green leaves with woolly grey backs, spines, and bright yellow-orange berries. It grows best by the sea, and although it loses its leaves it keeps its berries all the winter, as birds apparently do not appreciate the flavour. Male and female trees must both be planted, the same as hollies, because berries cannot form on the latter unless the flowers are first fertilised by the pollen of the male flowers.

Two Mock Oranges next took my fancy (in nursery language these are called Philadelphus); one, P. purpureo maculatus, a single flower with a striking purple blotch at the base of each petal, and P. Lemoinei "Avalanche," the branches weighted down with scented snow. Then there was Xanthoceras sorbifolia with red and white flowers, and Pernettya mucronata, a low-growing shrub with glossy leaves and pink berries shaped like tiny apples in thick clusters.

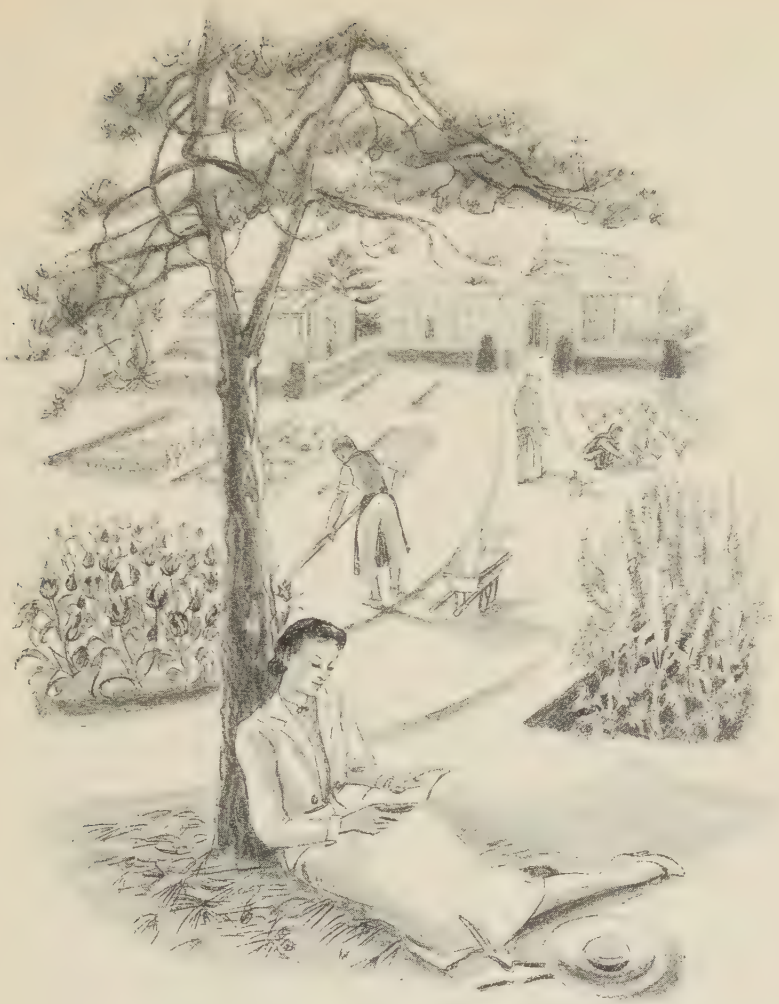
The foreman who accompanied me on my travels was very patient and helpful, and answered my naïve questions with the same courtesy he would have shown an expert on tour. We slipped off the subject in hand every now and then when he was discussing his personal ambition and his family. The latter sounded so interesting that I found myself regarding a whole bed of rich, blue Delphiniums with but a languid eye.

Having returned to the subject of gardens, I asked him how they moved enormous specimen trees and shrubs, we were then passing, when they were sold.

"I have heard pathetic tales of friends who decide after some years to reorganise their well-established gardens," I said. "Unfortunately the trees and shrubs do not always appreciate the moving and disobligingly die off. But they are not nearly so large as these," I concluded.

The secret seemed to lie in moving the trees every year, whether they were sold or not.

The same applies to fruit trees. If they are grown in good soil



"I stretched myself luxuriously amongst the pine needles."

they make a mass of close, fibrous roots, and by lifting them each year (even if they are only dug round and replanted in the same place), these roots are encouraged to grow in place of thick roots running laterally and a few long, tough tap roots striking a downward course into the subsoil.

Plants and trees grow these thick roots particularly in poor soils to reach out further afield for food, and if they are moved after remaining undisturbed for some years these roots are severed and that means a serious setback for the tree. If it becomes really necessary to move big specimens which have stood undisturbed for years it is wiser to dig fairly deeply about three feet from the trunk in a circle during the winter, and top dress with manure the following summer to encourage fresh fibrous roots before the tree is finally lifted from the ground a year later. Frequent waterings and mulchings the following summer and firm staking will probably save the situation. If it is an evergreen tree it will be advisable to lift in spring rather than winter.

By the time I had learned all this we were passing rows of herbaceous plants, some just coming into bloom. On one side of the main road was a large area of Parrot Tulips, nearly over but still blooming sufficiently to enable me to appreciate their colour.

The bed was like a crowd of butterflies especially chosen for their gay colouring. It had been my impression that Parrot Tulips were rather top-heavy, untidy flowers which never fully opened and gave the impression of something crippled. These, however, were tall, stately chalices, striped and variegated, perfect in form and colouring. A few varieties I made special note of were: "Black Boy," maroon and yellow; "American Flag," red and white; "Dainty Maid," mauve and white; "Vondel," dark red, white stripe; "Gellart," chocolate and yellow; and "Fantasy," Clara Butt, pink with red and green markings; perhaps the best of all for erect habit and full development.

From these we went to the Irises, when I felt a little cooler. These were mainly the large German Iris, and of these I made a note of "Corrida," "Fascination," "Gabriel" and "Harmony," all good mauves; "Sapphire," purple and gold; "Grace Sturtevant," coffee and maroon; and "Albiero," two shades of purple.

By this time the sun had come out in full glory and was

blazing straight down into the nursery. I felt the heat pressing down on my head and up through my feet and all round me in fiery waves.

"May I sit down in the shade for a little?" I asked with some slight hesitation, and was ushered to a cool and shady spot beneath some fir trees while a box was conjured from nowhere to act as a seat.

"Perhaps you will excuse me while I fetch a few catalogues of our stock which you can glance through if you wish," he said. I murmured assent, and, discarding the wooden box as being too much like an unpadded throne for a hot day, I stretched myself luxuriantly among the pine needles.

After a time he returned with no less than four.

"If I come back in about half an hour," he said, "that will give you time to glance through them." And with that he was gone.

After ten minutes of permissible day-dreaming (Why do nurserymen wear cloth caps whatever the weather?) I tackled the catalogues.

I found very soon that things are not what they seem once you open a nursery catalogue. My knowledge of horticulture was revealed as being a great deal smaller than I had imagined; plants which I had known by colloquial names since my childhood confronted me in these catalogues with their equivalent nursery translations, and in case other people have also hunted for the white Syringa and the red May and known not where to find them I decided to prepare some sort of list that will help to link up the scientific names of plants with the plants we have been accustomed to call something quite different.

Popular Names and Catalogue Equivalents

Popular Name.	*Botanical Name.*	*Popular Name.*	*Botanical Name.*
Acacia, False.	Robinia.	Artichoke, Globe.	Cynara scolymus.
Aconite, Winter.	Eranthis hyemalis.	Artichoke, Jerusalem.	Helianthus tuberosus.
Alder, Common.	Alnus glutinosa.	Ash.	Fraxinus.
Alkanet.	Anchusa.	Aspen.	Populus tremula.
Allspice.	Calycanthus.	Aster, China.	Callistephus hortense.
Almond, Common.	Prunus Amygdalus.	Avens.	Geum.
Aloe (American).	Agave.	Azalea, Indian.	Rhododendron indicum.
Angelica Tree.	Aralia spinosa.		
Apricot.	Prunus Armeniaca.		
Arbor-vitæ.	Thuya occidentalis.		

Popular Name.	*Botanical Name.*
Balm of Gilead.	Cedronella canariensis.
Balsam.	Impatiens.
Bamboo.	Arundinaria.
Barberry.	Berberis.
Basil.	Ocimum.
Bay, Sweet.	Laurus nobilis.
Bead Plant.	Nertera depressa.
Beech.	Fagus.
Bellflower.	Campanula.
Bergamot.	Monarda didyma.
Birch.	Betula.
Blanket Flower.	Gaillardia.
Bluebell, English.	Scilla nonscripta.
Bluebell, Scotch.	Campanula rotundifolia.
Blue Gum.	Eucalyptus globulus.
Borage.	Borago.
Broom.	Cytisus.
Broom, Butcher's.	Ruscus aculeatus.
Buckthorn, Sea.	Hippophæ rhamnoides.
Calico Bush.	Kalmia latifolia.
Campion.	Lychnis.
Campion, Rose.	Lychnis coronaria.
Candytuft.	Iberis.
Canterbury Bell.	Campanula medium.
Carnation.	Dianthus caryophyllus.
Catmint.	Nepeta Mussini.
Cedar, Japanese.	Cryptomeria japonica.
Celandine, Greater.	Chelidonium majus.
Celandine, Lesser.	Ranunculus ficaria.
Chalk Plant.	Gypsophila paniculata.
Chamomile.	Anthemis nobilis.
Cherry (Flowering).	Prunus cerasifera.
Cherry Pie.	Heliotropium peruvianum.
Cherry, Winter.	Solanum pseudocapsicum.
Chestnut, Eating.	Castanea sativa.
Chestnut, Horse.	Æsculus hippocastanum.
Chestnut, Spanish.	Castanea.
Chinese Lantern.	Physalis.
Christmas Rose.	Helleborus niger.
Cinquefoil.	Potentilla.
Columbine.	Aquilegia.
Cone Flower.	Rudbeckia.
Cornflower.	Centaurea cyanus.
Cornflower, Perennial.	Centaurea montana.
Crab Apple.	Pyrus Malus.
Cress, Rock.	Arabis.
Cress, Rock, Purple.	Aubrietia.
Currant, Flowering.	Ribes sanguineum.
Cypress, Summer.	Kochia tricophylla.
Daffodil.	Narcissus.
Daisy.	Bellis.
Daisy, Blue.	Agathæa cœlestis.
Daisy, Bush.	Olearia Haastii.
Deodar.	Cedrus Deodara.
Dogwood.	Cornus.
Edelweiss.	Leontopodium alpinum.
Fennel, Giant.	Ferula communis.
Flax.	Linum.
Flea Bane.	Erigeron.
Floss Flower.	Ageratum mexicanum.
Forget-me-not.	Myosotis.
Foxglove.	Digitalis.
Gardener's Garters.	Phalaris arundinacea variegata.
Garland Flower.	Daphne Cneorum.
Golden Rod.	Solidago.
Grass, Pampas.	Cortaderia argentea.
Grass, Quaking.	Briza media.
Harebell.	Campanula rotundifolia.
Hawthorn.	Cratægus Oxyacantha.
Heath.	Erica.
Heath, Tree.	Erica arborea.
Hepatica.	Anemone Hepatica.
Heron's Bill.	Erodium.
Holly.	Ilex.
Holly, Sea.	Eryngium.
Hollyhock.	Althæa.
Honesty.	Lunaria biennis.
Honeysuckle.	Lonicera.
Hop.	Humulus lupulus.
Hornbeam.	Carpinus betulus.
Houseleek.	Sempervivum.

Popular Name.	*Botanical Name.*
Ice Plant.	Mesembryanthemum crystallinum.
Indian Shot.	Canna.
India-rubber Plant.	Ficus elastica.
Ivy.	Hedera.
Ivy, Kenilworth.	Linaria cymbalaria.
Jacob's Ladder.	Polemonium.
Judas Tree.	Cercis siliquastrum.
Juniper.	Juniperus.
Kerria, White-flowered.	Rhodotypos kerrioides.
Knot Weed.	Polygonum.
Lace Flower.	Didiscus cærulea.
Lady's Slipper.	Cypripedium.
Larch, Common.	Larix europæa.
Larch, Golden.	Pseudolarix Fortunei.
Larkspur.	Delphinium.
Laurel.	Prunus Laurocerasus.
Laurel, Portugal.	Prunus lusitanica.
Lavender.	Lavandula.
Lavender Cotton.	Santolina.
Lavender, Sea.	Statice.
Lead Wort.	Plumbago.
Lenten Rose.	Helleborus orientalis.
Lilac.	Syringa.
Lily.	Lilium.
Lily, African.	Agapanthus.
Lily, Arum.	Richardia.
Lily, Day.	Hemerocallis.
Lily, Kaffir.	Schizostylis.
Lily of the Valley.	Convallaria.
Lily, Herb.	Alstrœmeria.
Lily, Plantain.	Funkia.
Lily, Torch.	Kniphofia.
Lily Tree.	Magnolia conspicua.
Lily, Water.	Nymphæa.
Lime.	Tilia.
Love-in-a-Mist.	Nigella damascena.
Love-lies-Bleeding.	Amarantus caudatus.
Lupin.	Lupinus.
Lupin Tree.	Lupinus arboreus.
Lyre Flower.	Dicentra spectabilis.
Mallow.	Malva.
Mallow, Marsh.	Althæa officinalis.
Mallow Tree.	Lavatera arborea.
Maple.	Acer.
Marguerite.	Chrysanthemum frutescens.
Marigold.	Calendula.
Marigold, Marsh.	Caltha palustris.
Marjoram.	Origanum.
Mayweed, Double.	Matricaria.
Meadow Saffron, Spring.	Bulbocodium vernum.
Meadow Sweet.	Spiræa Ulmaria.
Medlar.	Mespilus.
Mexican Orange Flower.	Choisya ternata.
Mezereon.	Daphne Mezereum.
Michaelmas Daisy.	Aster.
Mignonette.	Reseda.
Milfoil.	Achillea.
Mimosa.	Acacia.
Mint.	Mentha viridis.
Mock Orange.	Philadelphus.
Monkey Puzzle.	Araucaria.
Monkshood.	Aconitum.
Morning Glory.	Ipomœa purpurea.
Mountain Ash.	Pyrus aucuparia.
Mulberry.	Morus.
Myrtle.	Myrtus.
Nasturtium.	Tropæolum majus.
Nightshade, Deadly.	Atropa belladonna.
Oak.	Quercus.
Old Man's Beard.	Clematis vitalba.
Orris Root.	Iris florentina.
Oswego Tea.	Monarda didyma.
Pæony.	Pæonia.
Pæony Tree.	Pæonia Moutan.
Partridge Berry.	Gaultheria procumbens.
Pasque Flower.	Anemone pulsatilla.
Passion Flower.	Passiflora.
Peach.	Prunus persica.
Pear.	Pyrus communis.
Peppermint.	Mentha piperita.
Pink, Sea.	Armeria.
Plum.	Prunus communis.
Poppy.	Papaver.
Poppy, Californian.	Eschscholtzia californica.
Poppy, Plume.	Bocconia cordata.
Poppy, Californian Tree.	Romneya Coulteri.

Popular Name.	*Botanical Name.*
Poplar.	Populus.
Primrose.	Primula.
Primrose, Evening.	Œnothera.
Privet.	Ligustrum.
Ragwort.	Senecio.
Red-hot Poker.	Kniphofia.
Resurrection Plant.	Anastatica.
Rhubarb.	Rheum.
Rock Rose.	Cistus.
Rose of Heaven.	Agrostemma cœlirosa.
Rosemary.	Rosmarinus officinalis.
Rowan.	Pyrus aucuparia.
Rue.	Ruta.
Rue, Meadow.	Thalictrum.
Rush.	Scirpus.
Sage.	Salvia.
St. John's Wort.	Hypericum calycinum.
Sandwort.	Arenaria.
Scabious.	Scabiosa.
Self Heal.	Prunella.
Service Tree.	Pyrus Sorbus.
Sloe.	Prunus spinosa.
Snapdragon.	Antirrhinum.
Sneeze-wort.	Helenium.
Snow in Summer.	Cerastium tomentosum.
Snowberry.	Symphoricarpus racemosus.
Snowdrop.	Galanthus.
Soapwort.	Saponaria.
Solomon's Seal.	Polygonatum.
Southernwood.	Artemisia Abrotanum.
Spearmint.	Mentha viridis.
Spider-wort.	Tradescantia.
Spruce.	Picea.
Spurge.	Euphorbia.
Squill.	Scilla.
Star of Bethlehem.	Ornithogalum umbellatum.
Starwort.	Aster.
Stock.	Matthiola.
Stonecrop.	Sedum.
Strawberry Tree.	Arbutus Unedo.
Sumach.	Rhus.
Sunflower.	Helianthemum.
Sun Rose.	Helianthus.
Sweet Cicely.	Myrrhis odorata.
Sweet William.	Dianthus barbatus.
Sycamore.	Acer pseudoplatanus.
Tamarisk.	Tamarix.
Tarragon.	Artemisia dracunculus.
Teasel.	Dipsacus.
Thorn.	Cratægus.
Thrift.	Armeria maritima.
Thyme.	Thymus vulgaris.
Tickseed.	Coreopsis tinctoria.
Toadflax.	Linaria.
Tobacco Plant.	Nicotiana.
Traveller's Joy.	Clematis vitalba.
Treasure Flower.	Gazania Pavonia.
Tulip.	Tulipa.
Tulip Tree.	Liriodendron tulipifera.
Umbrella Tree.	Magnolia tripetala.
Valerian.	Centranthus ruber.
Verbena, Lemon-scented.	Lippia citriodora.
Wallflower.	Cheiranthus.
Walnut.	Juglans regia.
Wattle.	Acacia.
Whitethorn.	Cratægus Oxyacantha.
Willow.	Salix.
Willow Herb.	Epilobium.
Windflower.	Anemone.
Winter Sweet.	Chimonanthus fragrans.
Wintergreen.	Pyrola minor.
Witch Hazel.	Hamamelis.
Wood Sorrel.	Oxalis Acetosella.
Woodruff.	Asperula odorata.
Wormwood.	Artemisia Absinthium.
Yarrow.	Achillea.
Yew, Common.	Taxus baccata.
Yulan.	Magnolia-conspicua.

Chapter Six

TEA AND TALK

A FEW days later I received a cordial invitation, written in a bold, flowing hand, to "take tea" with the Vicar and his wife and a few friends, "very informal."

In spite of the "very informal" I set out in my best bib and tucker, knowing how sometimes the "informality" as interpreted by the hostess means wearing the next thing to an Ascot *ensemble*.

The day was warm and fine when I set out, although there was certainly a good deal of wind. The Vicarage was not far away, which was just as well, as the "bib and tucker" had taken longer to arrange than I expected; also the best hat had to be firmly held in place to prevent the wind, now increasing, from rolling it down the road like a plate.

The Rectory itself was about two hundred years old, mellowed to a warm rich colour and resting lazily and securely beneath the massive boughs of old oaks and cedars. The drive was flanked by narrow beds crowded with bright flowers set like jewels in broad stretches of lawn. They nodded and whispered to one another, and the wind shouted through the trees as I hurried up the drive. I began to feel quite self-conscious.

The heavy door of the Rectory opened for my entry and closed behind me, and I found myself in a large, warm, panelled hall, with a wide chimney-piece and broad stairs reaching up to the rooms above. As I crossed over the heavy rugs on the polished floor I felt an atmosphere of welcome and friendliness, which soon encouraged my weakness for day-dreaming when sunk into a deep, comfortable armchair.

This, however, was soon interrupted by a quiet voice, which instantly telescoped me back into my immediate surroundings.

"Delighted to see you," said George. "We have a few friends all connected with Church activities, and I am afraid you may

feel a little bored by the conversation, but now that you have come to live in the village I hope you will take an interest in the things we try to do and join with us in whatever appeals to you most."

"I will give some garden talks to the Women's Institute," I said.

"They will be most grateful to have the benefit of your knowledge and experience of the subject in about five years' time." I felt he had scored.

"Anyway, after tea I will show you round, and I hope you will ask me any questions you wish."

"I am sure your wife does not wish me to stay for the night," I replied. Still continuing in this vein, he led the way through the dining-room and french windows to a flapping tent on the lawn. Motioning me to a chair among a group of people, sitting half in half out of the tent, introductions then took place.

"I am *so* glad you were able to come. Isn't it *too* delightful to have tea in the garden. *Would* you mind, Miss Smith, reclaiming those paper serviettes from the middle of the Pæonies? Did you say 'damn' or 'jam,' dear? The tent is so noisy to-day. George, the jam, please. I always say how delightful it is to have tea out of doors on a warm summer day. Mr. Mason, *would* you tighten up the ropes or something? I think this side of the tent is coming down, *so* inconvenient."

Turning to me, Mrs. George continued *sotto voce,* "Our Scoutmaster, such a delightful man; we all think he is very like Robert Taylor, except that he wears glasses and a moustache and is fair instead of dark; but, after all, I always say you can't have everything, and what does the outside matter if the inside is pure gold? We want some hot water, thank you so much, Mr. Mason. Now about the flower show?" And the hostess kept up a running flow of conversation while she dispensed tea and cakes and hospitality in general.

Having retrieved the serviettes from the Pæonies and my hat from a clump of Rhododendrons, Miss Smith, a rather depressed little person, seated herself next to me with a deep sigh and helped herself to bread and butter.

"Jam or honey?" I enquired.

"Neither, thank you; couldn't touch them—death to the digestion."

"I thought honey was already partly digested."

"Possibly, but terrible for human digestion—too much sugar. I have to be so careful; I hardly eat enough to support a sparrow." Here came vivid medical details and a list of doctors while she consumed three more slices. "You have bought the house in the valley, haven't you?" she concluded gloomily.

I agreed.

"Well, you won't be there long." She continued helping herself to a large slice of cake. "Can't expect anyone to live very long in a death-trap like that. Fever mists rise from the stream and shroud the garden in fog when the sun sets, and when it is quite dark swirls of mist creep up the garden and in at the window. Owls hoot in the woods, and strange cries have been heard coming from the ash tree. The cows in the surrounding meadows have been found dead." She edged closer to me. "Do you know what I think?" she whispered confidentially. "I think there's been a murder in the house. If you stay there you'll be found dead and cold one morning; you mark my words."

George looked in at this point, and I must say I blessed him for it.

"What comic stories are you passing on to our new resident, Miss Smith?" he enquired. "I really don't think she needs cheering up; you come over here and work your spells on me and tell me how I am to raise some more money for the chancel roof."

Miss Smith certainly brought contented depression to a fine art, but there was nothing wrong with her appetite, anyway. Meanwhile the visitors were deep in discussion concerning the annual flower show. This was evidently contributed to by the whole village and the surrounding districts, and, after listening to the flow of conversation for a little, I wondered who there was left in the village who paid to come in and enjoy the show as "public."

Apparently out of a fairly large village the local horticultural society boasted one president, twelve vice-presidents, fifteen honorary vice-presidents and forty-nine committee members, all of whom had complimentary tickets, of course.

Besides these, however, there was the "trade" (local nurseries, employees, wives and families), the "Press" (local editor, sub-editor, reporter, typist, office boy, wives and families), the catering firm (wives and families), the tent and marquee firm (wives and families), the band (wives and families), village police-

"What strange stories have you been telling our new resident, Miss Snipp?"

man (wife and family), and any friends the president and vice-presidents happened to have staying with them at the time—all had complimentary tickets for the flower show. The trade had them to induce larger and finer exhibits in return; the tent people, the catering firm and the band because it had been pointed out to the committee that although they were paid they made no profit but did it out of kindness; and the village policeman to encourage him, through his small energetic wife, to keep an eye on the strict payment of the "public" and small boys rather than having a snooze under a shady bush with his helmet over his eyes. The Press, of course, gave publicity free and must therefore be considered, but, as I think it must have been difficult to fill the paper week after week with interesting local news, perhaps this was not a great sacrifice on their part. The honorary vice-presidents and committee were induced (we hoped) to subscribe more generously or help the hon. secretary, who was the only one who did any real work. However, he always received a handsome annual "honorarium," so perhaps he did not feel he was being unduly overworked.

The discussion was turning on the subject of increasing the number of sections of the show, and each was pointing out how much more successful it was bound to be if the one in which each was interested was included. We had arrived at the possible introduction of needlework exhibits, canaries, dog show, goldfish, water-colours and a fun fair when George came up to me.

"I smell the approach of battle," he said. "Let us take the opportunity of creeping away out of sight, and I will show you the garden."

Chapter Seven

THE VICAR AGAIN INSTRUCTS

"WHEN first I came here," said the Vicar as we disappeared from the crowd, "the garden had been much neglected. This did not mean that it was densely overgrown, because this soil is so poor and sandy that, after a few years, plants and even weeds get smaller and smaller till the field is left in possession of a low, wiry kind of grass and sorrel. By the way, I expect you know that it is quite possible to tell the condition of your soil (broadly speaking, of course) by the kind of weeds you find growing in it. Really fine specimens of windflower, cranesbill and dropwort usually mean chalk; peat, on the other hand, will show St. John's wort, dog violet, gorse, heather and periwinkles. Clay produces wood sorrel, dog's mercury and the big, creeping buttercups. Clover and groundsel do well in gravel, while sand encourages the bulbous buttercups, the greater celandine, tansy, mallow and chamomile. If you have a damp spot you will find meadow-sweet, mare's-tail, cuckoo flower and a funny little rush, but if the water is stagnant and sour, there will be yellow moss and possibly sundew—the plant which catches insects for a living.

"This is very elastic, of course, and many weeds grow on all soils, but even so, with a plant like chickweed, you can tell if the soil is rich or if it is time it was remanured. If the plant is thick, green and luxuriant (I always like to see my chickweed like that before it is pulled up), the soil is rich. If it is small-leaved and lies flat, the soil is poor; and if the leaves turn yellow or red, or there is a good crop of sorrel, the soil is sour and must be limed."

"I heard that moss on the soil meant that it was sour," I said.

"That is true, but moss means that the liming is not merely advisable, but is considerably overdue.

"The soil here," he continued, "has plenty of stones in it, but

we find that apple trees appreciate stones; they evidently keep the roots cool and moist. Having cleared the garden, manured and planted up when we first came, we found that after a couple of years plants became smaller and smaller till the survivors were merely hanging on. The only things which seemed to do well were lupins, laurels, brooms and rhododendrons; even laurels are not too happy. This one over here"—he pointed to a little yellowish bush two feet high—"is eighteen years old, growing in the original soil, so you can tell how poor it is."

"I always thought digging and manuring was all that was necessary," I said. "What have you done since, because everything looks very happy now?"

"I am lucky enough to be able to obtain any amount of leaves (oak and beech are the best), and every winter one-third of the garden is trenched, a thick layer of leaves is worked well into the subsoil of each trench and a little manure mixed with the top soil. The leaves act like a sponge, holding the goodness in the ground and yet not interfering with the drainage. They rot right down in three years and form a valuable plant food till ultimately they seem to have disappeared. I know when this has happened because my plants begin to grow shorter and shorter in spite of a mulch of manure on the top. That is the worst of being on top of a hill; one gets a beautiful view, but all my hard-won soil becomes washed downhill by water drainage between the stones, eventually reaching the valley yonder, which is rich enough without additions."

"That sounds rather hard lines," I said, "but, do you know, I am inclined to think you have some cause to be thankful your garden is here. You said just now that you can obtain any amount of leaves to dig in. That makes me wonder how the poor unfortunates who live on bare hillsides where there are no woods conveniently near can ever hope to have fertile gardens."

"Ah, yes," was the reply. "You are quite right, and I am indeed very grateful for that plantation of trees, which provides me with leaf-mould, but those less fortunately situated in that respect are still not in hopeless plight if they just realise that almost any kind of waste vegetation is capable of enriching hungry soil. The thing to do is first to screen off a corner of the garden ground to make space, behind a hedge or trellis fence, for what is termed

a compost heap. Every time the lawn is mown the cut grass should go to that heap, as also green weeds, withered plant stems, the waste foliage of vegetables and other materials that will rot down, unless they are known to be infested with plant pests or diseases, in which case it is wiser to burn the rubbish and dig in the ashes. It is beneficial to mix garden rubbish in the stack rather than dump a mass of all one kind on a big bulk of another sort, but it may be more convenient to wait until the accumulation is fairly large and then start at one end to fork over and build into a fresh stack. The mixing becomes easy during that task. Another good plan is to dust one of the powders, sold for accelerating decomposition, over the material as it is being built up in stack form. When rubbish like this is rotted down it makes very serviceable manure of what is termed humus-forming character, and it is lack of humus that makes hillside gravel and light, sandy soils so poor and infertile."

"Oh; then I must not be so anxious to get every bit of refuse taken away. It is wonderful how even the most useless-looking things in Nature have some serviceable purpose to fulfil. Now there is another question I want to ask, but I hope you will pardon my ignorance. What is a mulch? You mentioned it a little while ago, and I did not quite grasp your meaning."

"A mulch is a layer of something spread evenly over the surface of the soil between growing plants to preserve moisture and keep the roots cool. It may be straw, hay, bracken, grass mowings or even weeds (not seeding) which have been hoed down and left to lie. Sometimes, too, peat moss is used for the purpose. In the case of a mulch of manure, of course, the plants are fed as well."

I was learning something which was destined to prove of greater importance than I realised at the moment.

We wandered between borders and past shrubs down to a small orchard, the stones rolling under my shoes.

"As far as possible I choose plants to suit the soil, because you will always get a better display if plants are naturally happy in the soil, whatever you do to it, particularly the shrubs, as they are more permanent."

He showed me a wonderful display of azaleas, large heaths and the calico plant (Kalmia latifolia), backed by glossy rhododendrons, beautiful in leaf even when not in flower.

"We have a good deal of peat in this part of the ground, and that suits these things. Come and look at my brooms."

We turned a corner and were met by a blaze of colour, not only vivid golden yellow, but crimson and yellow (Cytisus scoparius andreanus), deep red (C. Dorothy Walpole), cream and red (C. Daisy Hill), pink and red velvet (C. Lady Moore), very pale lemon (C. Moonlight) and a pink one (C. Donard Seedling). There were also white ones (C. albus) and five or six feathery weeping varieties.

"These are naturalised in grass, with narcissus, out of sight of the house, because they are untidy things when they have finished flowering, like the tree lupins." And he pointed to a round, fragile shrub of vivid green dotted about between the taller brooms. "Those have flowers like scented candles, and they must be cut back to the first tuft of green on each branch after they have finished flowering, otherwise they soon go bare and die."

We strolled back through the orchard up the garden again till we could hear the sounds of the "battle," softened by distance, floating towards us.

"These shrubs would do well in your garden," he went on, and pointed out a dark green shrub covered with powder blue, cone-shaped flower heads (Ceanothus dentatus) and another with bright orange flowers (Berberis Darwini)—rather prickly, I thought, but very lovely—"and, of course, you must not forget the Flowering Currant and the Golden Rain. There are many more that flower later in the summer, like the Weigelia with its rosy trumpets, the Viburnum Opulus (and there is a heavily scented variety), with its big balls of white flowers, the hydrangea and the graceful buddleia with long purple tassels named Buddleia variabilis. There are several varieties of this species bearing such names as Veitchii magnifica and splendens, all of which has long plumes of violet or purple flowers. Then there is the totally different Buddleia globosa (which I am not sure is worth growing, as it is over so quickly) must be pruned drastically after flowering; the hydrangea, however, is best left till the spring, as it is not very happy in hard frosts and pruning exposes its remaining buds unnecessarily."

He showed me the exquisite Japanese Bird Cherry—unfortunately nearly over—and described to me the flowers of his

graceful flowering plums (Prunus) and pears (Pyrus), many of these being ornamental with their small bronze foliage, even without their blossom.

I am Instructed in Pruning

"I saw you struggling with your rambling roses some while ago, and what I really wanted to show you was how to prune them. I did not manage to get all mine finished at the proper time, so let me show you on what are left."

He led the way to a piece of light trellis running the length of the garden and produced a heavy pocket-knife with the blade curved inwards at the end instead of outwards.

"That is to prevent the knife slipping off the wood," he explained. "Always use a knife shaped like this unless you indulge in the superior type of secateurs, which does not pinch the wood when cutting. A knife, if kept sharp as it must be, makes a clean cut with no ragged edges to rot or hold disease." As we walked towards the trellis I could see the difference at once between the ramblers with their young green stems (the very ones I had been so carefully cutting off with the old kitchen knife) neatly tied in fanwise with no stem crossing another. My effort had been to tie in anything that caught me as I passed by.

"How do you manage to get just the right number of stems to tie in?" I asked. "No more and no less."

"If a rambler rose grows reasonably strongly, all the wood which has flowered the previous year and all the small weak growths are cut out and the plant makes an average number of strong new shoots annually, but if ramblers are neglected or starved this balance is upset and useless wood and very weak growths take strength which should be used in forming new shoots while the crowded, spindly growths fight for light and air through the tangle which should have been cut out. Sometimes a rambler will put all its strength into one terrific shoot, but this should be discouraged by gently bending down the branch as it grows and forcing some of the sap back to the lower hardening wood."

With a few deft strokes he cut some of the ties binding the rose to the trellis.

"Always cut a thick rose from the top downwards rather

than cutting at the bottom and trying to pull the whole piece away. Usually it catches somewhere and then the trellis is loosened. If there are a number of roses to do, cut one convenient piece out whole and lay the rest on top. You will find this makes it easy work to gather up and remove all the rubbish to the heap, by pulling the bottom piece. If you try putting these long prunings in a wheelbarrow most of them fall out."

"I don't see why you need tie them at all with open trellis," I said, striving to be helpful by pushing the shoots in and out of the pattern.

"If you insist on losing both time and temper next year when you are pruning them," he said, pulling them out again and laying them down on the lawn in such a way that they did not cross and were ready to be tied up in the order in which they lay, "besides seriously damaging the trellis, then weave them in and out instead of tying them all up the front as I am doing now. Besides, your plan will have the added disadvantage of making it necessary to crawl behind the trellis to enjoy most of the bloom."

"I do admire the pattern of your trellis, anyway," I remarked.

"I am so glad," he said; "my sister made it."

"Your sister made it?" I repeated. "Why, it looks most elaborate."

"She ordered stout posts to be put in a certain distance apart; she then bought bundles of light laths and cut and nailed them together with long thin nails bent up at the back according to a pattern she worked out on paper to exact measurement. She then lifted each section and nailed it on to a post at each end and creosoted the lot. There it is," he finished proudly. "The advantage of having a light trellis is that if one part breaks or becomes damaged it is easily renewed without bringing the whole lot down; incidentally, when pruning the roses, you do not fill your eyes with small pieces of bark, because there is none, but on old rustic poles the frayed bark can be a nuisance.

"Over here." I followed meekly behind like the page-boy in the carol. "Over here is a climbing rose; this is pruned differently, more on the lines of the bush roses. The main stems are cut back to about half their length and the side growths and all weak growths are cut back to about two buds. This is the

same idea as young apple and pear trees, which the jobbing gardener usually delights in cutting back evenly all round to make them neat and tidy like a hedge."

"All this is so difficult to remember. I am having to learn such a lot in a short time, I feel I am getting a sort of mental indigestion."

"Remember it this way: There is a certain amount of pressure and sap in the root; if you do not prune at all the same amount of pressure will go towards developing each bud in each shoot, which will mean that they will all grow rather weakly. By cutting out the weak shoots and the worthless shoots you are reducing the number of buds but not the sap pressure; by shortening back the strong shoots, by a third or even half, you are reducing the buds still further. These remaining buds will give good flowering shoots. If, however, you go to the other extreme and cut a climbing rose or a strong rambler rose shoot right back, the sap will rush up the few buds left and give you probably one very strong shoot. This will grow too fast to produce good bloom on its soft sappy wood, or else the hard cutting will encourage it to revert back to bush type instead of maintaining a climbing habit. Sometimes severe pruning will even kill a strong climber.

"The same principle of pruning ramblers applies also to polyantha roses, blackberries, loganberries and raspberries; and shrubs such as philadelphus and escallonia. Black currants are also pruned in more or less the same manner. The principle of pruning climbers, on the other hand, is much the same as the method for bush or standard roses, gooseberries, red and white currants, apples and pears, and wistaria. The last has to be shortened back three or four times during the summer to encourage flowering spurs to form. The majority of shrubs benefit greatly by an occasional thinning out of old and exhausted wood, weak growths and dead wood, or an occasional shortening back when the tips of the shoots grow suddenly thin or die away, but otherwise most of them require little further attention."

We then strolled over to his rose beds, which were, despite the early date, already carrying a fair amount of flower. I could not attempt to describe the number of different varieties of pinks, yellows, apricots and all the colours between. I noted down the varieties which appealed to me most and seemed to grow well in

that type of soil, but there are so many hundreds of varieties now obtainable that I should advise everyone to make their own choice.

"Why is it that these roses are in bloom when everyone else's have hardly started to open yet?" I enquired.

"This is a method of my own." Then coming closer to me he whispered in my ear, "I never prune my roses till the middle of July."

"It certainly seems a good idea," I responded. "But why not?"

"I tried pruning in the approved fashion, but I found that on a poor soil like this the bushes took such a long time to make enough strong growth to flower on, and one or two didn't even try, but just died. So then I tried leaving my plants alone till they threw buds and flowers on the same growths they laboriously built up the previous summer. I now get a profusion of medium-sized roses very early, and prune them lightly after flowering. In August I get another crop of blooms which continues till the frosts. This treatment would probably be all wrong on a strong soil or heavy clay; the plants would make too much rampant growth and not enough flower, and of course it is no use for large exhibition blooms, but for a number of medium flowers I find that the best method, particularly on a poor sandy soil."

I wandered among the beds enjoying the beauty and colour all round me, and then heard George mutter, "Dear, dear, greenfly just starting."

This at any rate sounded familiar, even to me. Evidently the aphis family are democrats and take no heed of such distinctions of class as indicated by such terms as horticultural expert, rosarian, amateur gardener or ignoramus.

"Tell me what you do for that, will you, please?" I asked, knowing that if one has roses one must also have greenfly. I never heard of one without the other.

"I will do more than tell you, I will show you." He hurried across the garden to the shed.

Now that I know him better I realise that the only time one sees George hurry is if a parishioner is in urgent need, or if anything is waiting to be done in the garden.

He filled a bucket with water, took a good handful of soft soap and rubbed it down until it had all dissolved and added about a

wineglass of paraffin, not more. Taking a stout syringe with a plain open nozzle from the shelf he pumped it up and down in the water till he had a bucket full of lather and the paraffin had completely mixed instead of floating oilily on the surface. He then syringed the roses with his fingers placed lightly on the nozzle to form a coarse and powerful spray.

"Always have an open nozzle for this sort of thing. If you can't get one large enough, make it bigger with a gimlet—about the size of the hole in a bicycle pump without its rubber connection. As a matter of fact, I have syringed other peoples roses with a bicycle pump many times. A 'gentle dew from heaven' kind of spray is no use for these wretches."

I have since learnt that this mixture and spray is very useful in dealing with all forms of aphis (except the woolly kind on apple trees), but, of course, there are excellent brands of insecticide advertised for every conceivable kind of pest. Nevertheless, this is a good all-round preparation. I have also used a double-headed brush (like two soft toothbrushes joined face to face with a slight spring) which does good work when dipped into insecticide and passed up a long shoot covered thickly with aphis, but whatever is used, unless there is no wind and there is a specialist at work, one must be prepared to become as wet as the roses. Undoubtedly this is unpleasant, but unavoidable.

A feminine voice indulging in gracious good-byes floated towards us on the breeze.

"Oh, dear—quick, be a friend to me," said George. "I shall get into terrible trouble if I am found syringing in my 'tea' clothes. Go and head her off for me, will you?"

He thrust a bunch of roses he had gathered for me into my hand and I made off down the path round the house to the gate. The battle was evidently over, and, having engaged my hostess in a conversation long enough to give George time to hide the tools and repair the damage, I thanked her again and slowly wended my way homewards.

"Go and head her off for me, will you? will you?"

Chapter Eight

CONCERNING LAWNS AND FLOWER BEDS

BEAUTY and I resolved to pay our long-promised visit to the Chilcotts, and so one fine day we set out together. Beauty pressed his snub nose against the window of the car, while the sprung leather seat trembled with his excitement. The country was in its full beauty of fresh green leaf and wide sweeps of sunlit fields, where buttercups in their millions gleamed like stardust poured from the sky. Here and there the luxuriance of the meadows gave way to upland heaths, dotted with stunted firs in the hollows, and everywhere lay drifts of nodding flowers scattered with summer's lavish hand.

I used to wonder why people left the towns for the country; now I wondered why people left the country for the towns, although I fancied I might find plenty of reason when wet and cold set in with deadly earnestness. (By that time I had too many interests in the village to uproot myself and return to Town.) Having meditated thus far, Beauty licked my face and knocked off my hat.

We turned down a side road and entered a veritable forest of rhododendrons so beautiful that I had to get out and drink in all the colour and peace and the dozens of little bird songs all trilling together in the bushes. Beauty went to look for rabbits at about fifty miles an hour, and fell on his head two or three times in the process, while I put my hat straight after some minutes of absorbing this paradise.

After a little while we continued on our way (Beauty and his tongue both hanging out of the car), and turning a sharp corner came suddenly upon a large house surrounded by several brilliant beds of begonias.

Having been ushered into the drawing-room and endeavouring to straighten my clothes after evidences of Beauty's affection,

I was warmly greeted by Mrs. Chilcott, who told me her husband was in the garden and was very anxious to show me round.

"He is very proud of his garden, and it certainly does him credit if you like neatness and brilliance; personally, I like something quieter and more intimate. I like to see my plants appearing year after year to be greeted like old friends, and not pulled up and replaced as soon as they have flowered by another generation of bedding plants." "Tell me," I said, "how do you work together in the same garden when your ideas are so totally different?" "Simply by having my own piece to do what I like with," she replied. "It used to be the formal garden and is therefore a little secluded, and I potter about and grow all the plants I love that I have room for, particularly those with scent." We strolled out of the french windows on to the terrace.

"Do admire his lawn," she whispered; "he is so proud of it and it really does do him credit."

The Colonel strolled to meet us. "Glad you came. Fine day. What d'you think of those scarlet pæonies? Will show you some geraniums I've got. Fine, bright colour; makes you feel warm to look at them in this damned climate."

We strolled from the terrace to the grass, and I could say sincerely, "This really is a beautiful lawn, it is almost like a bowling green. I did not think you could get bowling greens that weren't bowling greens, if you know what I mean." "Wasn't when I first came here. All woolly moss with a few green spikes sticking up like a ragged battalion with bayonets. Every here and there a bare patch. I had Herbert then. 'Take 'em up and scrap 'em and put down a nice bit o' fresh green. I know a man——' Anyway I discouraged the man and anything he might have to sell right from the beginning. I marked out a narrow strip of lawn and raked it gently and carefully with a fine-toothed rake (got out a couple of barrow-loads of moss—made me decide to grow a few orchids). I mixed together a heap of sifted soil, guano and lawn sand, scattered it with a spade and rubbed it in with the back of the rake.

"Then I moved the string back the width of another strip and continued the process. You would never believe how much moss came out and how much soil went in. That was my first

taste of gardening as really hard work. Got Herbert to help, of course, but that wasn't any easier work, watching him to see that he raked thoroughly and sieved properly and fetching him when I'd waited for him and the barrow for twenty minutes."

"I always thought people put down fresh turf when the grass was bad, if they could afford it—if they couldn't I supposed they waited till they could," I contributed—not too brightly.

"Ruinous returfing a stretch like this; besides, I have a theory—may be wrong; seems to work here—grass which has survived unfair competition if given good conditions will grow thicker and more quickly than imported grass. It is used to this soil, whereas imported turf may come from something quite different, and when it gets landed in fresh quarters such as peat-land, it struggles along for a couple of years or else curls up and dies. The grass that survives against odds is the grass to do well when the odds are removed. This is not a bowling green or anything like one (thank you for the comparison, all the same), but nevertheless quite respectable. It is weeded and fed and watered and not mown too early in the season (and then without the box), and it is really quite good."

"What about the bare patches?" I enquired. "Those have to be turfed over, of course, but I get the soil removed first and fresh soil, lime, sand and bonemeal filled in before turfing. I only use the lime here because of the peaty nature of the soil; in the ordinary way it would not be necessary, but, of course, the turf has to be laid rather high to allow for the soil sinking, even if it has been well rammed beforehand."

We were passing beneath a fine stone pergola clothed in clematis flowers as big as soup plates. "Funny thing, soil," he went on. "Got a large patch of clay on that side; planted up this to match that; everything died this side; flourished over there—never know where you are with a garden. Got another patch of clay in the kitchen garden. Forever throwing in gravel and lime; suppose sometime it will be better soil than all the rest of the garden."

"I believe I have got what looks like an ancient lime pit," I said, rather alarmed at the prospect of generations of green things coming to an untimely end. "If you're planting shrubs choose from the lilacs, berberis, cotoneaster, philadelphus and

viburnums; or if you would like some lilies: croceum, candidum, martagon and chalcedonicum, all easy except candidum—temperamental as a film star, and nothing to be done about it. Knew a man who got exasperated after three years of candidum leaf; flung them out; bloomed all over the rubbish heap the following summer. They just leave you guessing."

He strode on ahead, but I felt I must ask him about the bright flower beds, so as we trotted along he dropped a few gems of advice in his shorthand way of speaking. "Begonias—tuberous; planted out second year, flower all summer. Store for winter dry, in boxes. Small bright ones are fibrous; treat as half-hardy annual and raise each year. Edge some of my beds with silver knapweed (Centaurea candidissima) raised from seed, August; or Cineraria maritima, also silver, raised from seed in spring. Geraniums in all colours come later on. Cuttings, August; winter under glass or in a south room if only a few are wanted. Plant out after frosts. Salvia patens; really herbaceous, not hardy. Store roots winter; brilliant blue. Salvia splendens; cuttings in spring; bright red, both excellent. Ageratum; neat, bright, seed, spring. Cuttings, autumn. Glass for both. Antirrhinums indispensable. Sow spring, heat; also stocks. Wallflowers for early spring, sow August. For later on Asters, of course; hardy annuals. Bedding Dahlias like 'Coltness Gem' about a foot high and vivid scarlet; sow in heat or buy rooted cuttings."

We wandered past some of the begonia beds; the leaves were almost as colourful as the flowers. "Expected to go on flowering for months on end; things exhaust themselves, of course," he said. "Liquid manure or fertiliser little and often, and no seed pods. Glad you like them."

We came to a thick green Yew hedge, green right down to the gravel path. "How do you manage to keep your hedges green and thick all the way down?" I asked. "Most of the hedges I have seen, particularly in Town, are thin and weedy and look miserable."

"Mainly plenty of light, plenty of rain, regular feeding and regular clipping."

"I never thought of hedges being fed. I suppose it's frightfully stupid, but somehow I considered hedges to be screens like fences and walls." "Many people do. Feed their roses enough

Vine growing overhead with little [illegible] bunches of [illegible]

to make them sick and have a hedge in the semi-dark, bone dry. Its leaves, never watered, get choked with dust; they clip off every speck of new growth as soon as it appears and wonder why it looks unhappy. It will help you in all your gardening to remember that the vitality of plants lies in their leaves. Deprive them of these and keep them in a poor soil and they will soon die. One of the finest ways to rejuvenate a fruit tree, a hedge or even grass is to feed it well and let it make fresh growth to be left unpruned for a couple of years—in the case of fruit trees and shrubs. Just let trees grow away as they please with nice fat green leaves, to get some strength into them and then gradually trim them back into shape again. If you are always cutting off and never replacing by feeding your hedge or grass or even fruit trees they will linger or die."

We walked through an arch in the hedge. "Privet and aspidistras have brought lingering to a fine art."

We entered the rose garden. I went straight over to a patch of colour vivid enough to compete with the begonias. "What is that?" I asked. "Polyantha rose 'Gloria Mundi,'" he replied. I walked from bed to bed of these brilliant little roses, eighteen inches high. I decided there and then that these should edge my rose beds, and so they do, but for the sake of the bush roses I have chosen paler colours like Coral Cluster and Mrs. Cutbush, but I let myself go over two small beds filled with Golden Salmon.

We admired the enormous blooms on the rose bushes in huge beds making up an immense rose garden, one by one. After this we walked what seemed to be about a couple of miles to the kitchen garden and another couple of miles round it, looking at forests of peas and beans, feathery rows of carrots, a jungle of fairylike asparagus, after which I admired magnificent peach trees, proudly exhibiting fruit as big as apples, and vines growing overhead with little green bunches of grapes. We "did" carnations and orchids, boxes with cuttings, boxes without but about to have cuttings, pots with cuttings, rows of newly washed pots without cuttings. On through the orchard and the herbs, back through flowering shrubs and rhododendrons to gravel-lawn-gate-car-dog. I was exhausted!

I said "Good-bye" faintly and turned the bonnet in a homeward direction. My hat was knocked off immediately and all

the powder (there wasn't much left I must confess) on my nose was gone in the first two minutes, but I didn't care. I didn't want to even think of a garden any more for months. I reached home; paused, horror-struck, on the doorstep. I had never even asked to see Mrs. Chilcott's garden!

Chapter Nine

BACK TO MY OWN WORK

I BEGAN to find myself getting quite busy in my own place, and, although there was very little actually growing in the garden, I tried my hand—among other things—at making some trellis and enjoyed myself thoroughly (laths are so light and easy), while Herbert knocked some stout posts into the ground in place of the ancient and rotting structure which had adorned the garden previously.

The trellis was about five feet high and a foot off the ground to allow me to hoe underneath, but during the course of construction Beauty enjoyed himself immensely. Laths and short lengths of laths were carried all over the garden and chewed into small pieces. I foresaw the handles of my tools and my shopping basket being reduced to pulp. In between the gardening, therefore, we got down to training, which he enjoyed as much as I did, although, naturally, a good deal of patience and perseverance is required.

As both those qualities are essential in successful gardening I thought I could not do better than practise them on the dog. The very first word I ever taught him was "No"—the most useful word of all—and he instantly stops whatever he is doing at the time. After that, essential words like "Come," "Wait," "Sit," and "Lie Down." "Come and Wait" enabled us to cross a busy road in perfect safety, while "Sit and Wait" would be obeyed sometimes for twenty minutes or more and was very handy in an emergency. We practised this occasionally when it wasn't necessary to keep in training.

"Wait" was about the hardest thing he had to do during his first two years, when he was abounding with youth and vitality; and I would quietly observe him from behind a bush or a window curtain sitting glued to the spot, trembling all over, with his ears pricked and his eyes fixed on my last point of disappearance.

In between this mental activity there was a second batch of annuals to thin out (some of them will not transplant, as I learnt to my cost, but the calendulas and stocks moved most successfully). The front grass had to be cut gently and rather gingerly with the shears, as newly sown grass is so easily pulled up. Also there was the trellis to be creosoted, and the few pieces of ramblers I had left to be tied in. The only way I could remove the creosote from my hands was by washing them in paraffin, using a nail brush as well, and then washing off the paraffin with cold water, soap and a good sprinkling of "Vim." I found that frequently using hot water to remove the paraffin made the skin dry and hard, but my overall continued to wear brown spots until the end of its days.

A week or so later I found that all the young shoots of the rambler curled up and died; very distressed, I consulted Herbert. "It's the creosote burns 'em," he explained. "Creosote trellis and leave it a fortnight or so before you tie up roses on it." And reluctantly I cut all the ties once more and laid the long trailing growths on the ground.

While waiting for this I taught Beauty to make himself useful by being able to carry my shopping basket, and later on the tools. After the experience with the trellis laths, I thought we would start straight away with something he wouldn't want to chew, so we spent an afternoon carrying the iron-handled coal shovel round the garden. By teatime he knew the words "Carry" and "Drop," and the iron handle had cured him of the desire to bite up what he carried in his mouth. We practised occasionally for some weeks, of course, but he never forgot to hold things gently, and felt very proud bearing my shopping basket up the village. He got into fearful trouble when he dropped the basket in order to join in a dog fight, but I thought that if we made a job of it at the beginning, future dog fights would not seem so tempting, and he never forgot again.

The most entertaining part of this training was when he first tried to carry the rake until he found the centre of balance, and even then he had a dreadful time. Later on, when I erected an archway, I let him puzzle it out for himself, and now he can negotiate any archway or garden gate by coming through sideways, although the effect is decidedly comic.

When we had mastered this fairly successfully I consulted

Herbert on the possibility of having a few quick-growing vegetables in the kitchen garden, now that it had been dug and manured and cleared of couch grass. "Thought you'd come round to 'avin' a few sooner or later, ma'am. Got a tidy bit o' green on my allotment. I wouldn't be overchargin' you and could supply you with peas, beans, lettuces and spring carrots. I'll bring some up for 'ee Friday."

"Very well, Herbert, but remember the price must be reasonable. Meanwhile, is there any reason why we should not sow a few things which only take eight or ten weeks before they are ready? I know," I went on, "that most vegetables are sown in the spring, but I don't see why we shouldn't sow a few now, although it's nearly July, all the same."

"Well, ma'am, spring do be the time fur seed sowin', I reckon; don't seem right some'ow to sow any other time. Groun' be 'ard and dry. Sow pinch o' lettuce if you like, but t'others, shouldn't bother roun' wi' they. Temptin' Providence doin' seed sowin' out o' season; fairly temptin' Providence."

"But, Herbert, the ground can't be dry; it has rained in torrents the last two nights, and we have got a hose in any case. I think I will try all the same," I went on; "at any rate, you can teach me to sow and plant in a kitchen garden even if nothing comes of it." So presently Beauty came trotting back with a collection of seed packets in the basket, and I followed.

We spent the afternoon sowing busily. Dwarf peas, turnips, lettuces, shorthorn carrots, radishes and some more sweet peas. "I thought we might sow a few more to come into flower in September. I have never seen sweet peas in September to my knowledge, but I really don't know why—anyway, let's try." 'Erbert's response to these remarks was merely to grunt and mutter, "Don't 'old in turning seasons upside down, no good 'ill come of it, you mark my words." And he plodded away to fetch extra tools. I told Beauty to fetch my spade, and presently they appeared together fairly bristling with handles and bright steel. First of all we trod over the light soil and raked the surface fine, then we stretched the line across and with the corner of the rake drew a tiny trench about an inch deep all along the line.

Some dry soil was mixed with the fine seed in a six-inch pot and shaken out gently and evenly all along the trench. The

earth was then pushed back against the line and firmed by prodding with the rake standing on end all along the line. The ground was lightly raked in front of the sown seed, the line moved forward and the same process repeated.

Herbert was a different man when sowing things in rows; after a while he forgot that he was tempting Providence, and, being in his beloved kitchen garden, his whole personality changed. He was neat and methodical, meticulous over the exact distance apart between the rows and patiently taught me how to work neatly and quickly with minimum effort and maximum speed.

The larger seeds like the peas were sown in little trenches between two and three inches deep. "Sometimes sow 'em in a shaller trench three rows in a trench, angled, better way really."

"What's 'angling?'" I asked. "Puttin' in seeds or plants opposite the spaces in the previous row instead of opposite the plants in the previous row. Fruit trees are often planted like that; gives 'em more room to grow without wasting any space."

The carrots and turnips we sowed in rows eighteen inches apart, while the lettuce and radish seed was mixed together and sown thinly in a row between, or, alternatively, a row of dwarf peas. "Lettuce be tops and radish be root, so they don't interfere wi' one another," he explained. "Anyway, radishes be over before lettuces get big. You will be wantin' space July and August to sow or plant out cabbages, cauliflower, also Brussels sprouts planted in September."

After this we selected a piece of kitchen garden to act as a nursery bed—on Herbert's advice. "Better transplant the delphiniums, lupins, coreopsis and gaillardias here, and next spring plant them out in the flower border. Then you can use this bed to raise wallflowers, Canterbury bells, myosotis and pansies, and another piece to grow flowers for cutting for the 'ouse." This seemed sound common sense, and we marked out the spaces accordingly.

"I must have a few herbs," I said. And deciding what I wanted we marked out that piece also; from this I proceeded to roughly mark out the rest of the garden, which involved a great deal of time and patience. The next day I thought out a different way of laying out the garden, and spent the day moving all the sticks and labels. A week later I decided to include

various features I had seen in other peoples' gardens in the meantime. It was a good thing that I had not planted up any of the garden on my first ideas. I feel now that that is where many people come to grief, in deciding and planting too hastily and finishing with a garden with which they never feel satisfied. I decided, therefore, after wasting three days in measuring-up and changing my mind, that the best solution would be to take final measurements, transfer these to paper and use a piece of indiarubber when I wanted to change my mind.

By the time I had made my final decisions the planting season was close at hand. Anyway, I was the only person in the village who was able to fill her house with mauve and pink sweet peas on the first of October.

Chapter Ten

OTHER PEOPLE'S GARDENS AGAIN

HAVING fully recovered from the "Cook's Tour" of the Chilcotts' garden, and feeling also that it was most discourteous of me not to have even asked to see Mrs. Chilcott's garden, I paid another visit a little later on specially to rectify this omission.

"I know how it is," she assured me; "we have got a pretty large garden, and by the time a visitor has been shown round by an enthusiast like my husband they find they can barely manage to totter to the gate, and probably do not want to hear any more about plants for months!" I admitted that I had felt a trifle like that myself.

"However," she went on, "I do not propose to talk shop all the time you are here. I know how terribly boring a person with one subject can be, so come along and have a look at my water-colours." She led the way to her own private sanctum, and showed me her collection of most excellent water-colours. We continued thus engrossed long after the tea had arrived and was getting cold. Having at length turned from the glowing little landscapes on the wall, and seated ourselves, she turned to the subject of small gardens.

"I am always struck by the astonishing variety of villa gardens," she said, "particularly those attached to the rows of houses one sees just outside any large town. The houses are all more or less alike, but the little front gardens show an amazing variety, and it amuses me to see how often they reflect their owners."

"I am glad you cannot see much of mine from the road," I interposed at this stage, promptly taking the remark personally. "For a short time mine looked like a giant basket of mustard and cress with a bald patch in the middle." She smiled. "I

haven't seen one like that yet, certainly, but when I lived just outside London for some years I frequently passed through one of the new districts, and paused to compare the different front gardens. One, I remember, was always beautifully neat, but the owner had his own ideas as to when the plants should be put in, regardless of whether the spring was early or late.

"If the season was late, and the bedding plants weren't ready, the spring plants, still in flower, came out just the same, and the beds remained empty for a period. Later, again, if the summer was a hot one, the summer plants would remain in the beds, rather faded, until the appointed date arrived for the wallflowers to go in. Regular as clockwork on certain dates the plants were taken out and fresh ones installed. I remember also that he had rather a charming path, leading round to the front door; it was crazy paving, but all the joints had been painstakingly filled with short bright green moss, like green velvet. You can have no idea how attractive it looked."

She poured out another cup of tea. "Another very different type of garden is always in stages of completion, but never seems to arrive at the final stage. I should imagine the owner spent most of his life breaking out into fresh enthusiasms. Half a border is planted up and the box is left on the path half full of plants till they are struggling to flower in the box. A bird bath has been partly made, but a lump of cement has been left on the rim when he rushed off to do something else in the middle of his work, and the bird bath failed to reach its intended completion. The grass is cut, but the edges are not clipped; the top and sides of the hedge are cut, but outside it is brushed by the passers-by. You may see him any evening in his garden, possibly with the gate off its hinges, correcting the squeak, while a barrowful of weeds sits in the middle of the path waiting to be emptied. Probably one bed will have large gaps between its weeds where he has dived in and hauled out a handful here and there. One can imagine such a gardener being a man who has many things in the house on the instalment system, and many more will have been removed when the enthusiasm and therefore the payments have died down.

"A different kind of garden, which I am bound to admit probably belongs to a lady, contains the strangest assortment of plants imaginable planted according to their size when pur-

chased, regardless of their size when full grown. A white marguerite will be between a marigold and stock at the back of the border, while a row of cosmea plants will adorn the front. The garden will contain a miscellaneous assortment of plants given to her by friends and 'popped in' promiscuously.

"If you should pass by when she is working she will probably have on a brightly coloured cretonne overall and a floppy straw hat shading wisps of hair and childlike china blue eyes. She will probably be searching all over the garden for the trowel with a plant in one hand and the trowel in her pocket. A large cat may be asleep in the middle of the geraniums. She is too tender-hearted to remove it. At least one tool will be left out every night (not always the same one and sometimes more than one), which will be taken round to the back door by the postman in the morning. In spite of this everyone will like her and respect her for her kindness and simplicity, although I am afraid she will have been cheated many times by the unscrupulous.

"Then there is the man who has read up all about making crazy paving artificially, and, the first few pieces being successful, he has gone quite mad and turned the front garden into a paved courtyard, reducing the middle bed to a circle the size of a soup plate.

"Lastly, there is the beautifully kept front garden belonging to the man of method. No sooner have the plants finished flowering than the whole garden is stocked with fresh ones. The rambler is pruned and tied up, the grass is clipped and the edges finished, no stray tendril escapes from the creeper over the door. And yet somehow I get the impression that it is too perfect. There is plenty of flower, but the plants grow neatly and the colour-scheme is not in the least artistic. I gather the impression that plants are not regarded as living things, but as something necessary to make the front bright and tidy, like painting the house and the gate. I fancy that inside the house everything is in its appointed place, but the owner has little tolerance for other peoples' weaknesses, and very little humour."

As she talked I could picture so well the neat row of homes and little gardens with a fat low window bulging out over each and a neat path leading to the gleaming step of the front door.

By the time we had finished exchanging reminiscences and

"A large cat asleep in the middle of the geraniums"

Beauty had disposed of his one lump of sugar—a sign that the meal was over—it was nearly time for us to go home. However, I was not going to leave the house a second time without visiting the "retreat," and so presently, with Beauty endeavouring to lead the way but not succeeding very well, we strolled round the house to her own particular corner of the estate.

Her garden was apparently enclosed by a wooden fence, but this had almost disappeared beneath a wealth of climbers behind a long and deep herbaceous border on one side and a variety of shrubs on the other. "Originally this corner had a high hedge to enclose it and make it private from the rest of the garden, but I knew what a nuisance the roots of hedges can be; besides, I wanted to grow some of the fine clematis varieties like Crimson King, Mrs. Bush and Lady Northcliffe, all of the Lanuginosa group; the Dutch honeysuckle, with large orange-red flowers; Solanum crispum, like a climbing mauve potato flower; and, of course, the old scented Jasmine.

"Do not expect to find anything rare in this corner of the garden," she said. "It is planted up entirely with the plants I most admire, and, as far as possible, scented varieties."

At the end was a raised border, filled with prosperous-looking bushes covered with white and yellow candles—"Tree Lupins, planted for their heavy perfume, but they have to be cut back immediately after flowering if they are to keep their bushiness." In front of them fresh green fern fronds radiated from a tawny centre, and between the ferns rose the stately spires of the tiger lily. "That bed is also full of spring bulbs, and I have hundreds planted between the shrubs in this long border against the fence. This border is inclined to be shady, so I have reserved it for early spring-flowering shrubs and bulbs, while the border on the front, the long herbaceous border, gives colour from May to October. The bed at the end was raised purposely to give me a piece of retaining stone wall in which to grow my favourite wall plants like Aubrietia Dr. Mules, Alyssum, Lithospermum, Othonnopsis cheirifolia (a plant with most peculiar grey leaves like flat teaspoons all held upright in layers, and yellow flowers), Iberis, Scabiosa graminifolia, Armeria and the Alpine Pinks, Phlox subulata and Erinus alpinus. All very ordinary, but they transform this grey wall into a curtain of vivid colour in early summer."

I had to resort to the notebook again to jot down the names of the conifers (as she called them) among her shrubs: Cupressus lawsoniana Allumi, a lovely blue cypress, Cup. law. aurea (golden) and Cup. law. glauca with silvery foliage. Retinospora obtusa Crippsi was very like the second one but even more beautiful. In the front was a small conifer with vertical "leaves" bright gold (Thuya orientalis nana aurea). Among these was a copper beech and a wonderful dark blue-flowered shrub called Ceanothus rigidus. I recognised the summer foliage of the exquisite early-flowering plums, cherries and pears which I had seen at the nurseries, and was introduced to Chimonanthus fragrans, which bears scented flowers in mid-winter, while Daphne Mezereum does the same in early spring. This border must have been a picture of pink and yellow in spring, while the Cupressus gave it colour all the winter.

I followed my hostess across the lawn to the long herbaceous border in its full glory of colour and scent. Almost immediately, and without remark, she was half buried in the centre tying up an Anchusa. Noticing me gazing, she showed me how to stake and tie up border plants without the stakes showing. One point to remember is to choose the shortest, thinnest stakes possible which will adequately support the plant they are intended to uphold. Bury one-third in the ground as near the centre of the plant as possible, use soft green fillis for tying, and wind it once round the stake and once round the plant stem, allowing sufficient fillis between for the flower stem to stand at its natural distance away from the stake and not be hauled close to the mast as it were. This applies to the more branching types of plants—one loose tie to each branch. Heavier plants like Delphiniums and Hollyhocks need one stake to each flowering stem.

"You will choose your own border plants from the nursery, of course," remarked Mrs. Chilcott, strolling ahead of me, "but whatever else you select I do suggest a plentiful planting of Anchusa, Lupin, perennial Asters, Helenium, Coreopsis, Eryngium and border Chrysanthemums. These, with a few Delphiniums (including the fine Bella-Donna, semi-plena variety), Campanulas, and Veronicas will give you a good show all the summer and autumn whatever else you choose. If you are fond of vivid colouring do not forget the flamboyant Oriental Poppy and the scarlet Lychnis chalcedonica, but these, like the

Irises, are over so soon, and, unlike the Anchusas, Delphiniums and Lupins, no amount of cutting after flowering will induce them to yield a second show of bloom."

She picked her way carefully out of the border, trailing a stream of green string behind her. "If you have a weakness for strolling about in the garden after sunset in the dusk, choose a good many whites and yellows. Strangely enough, most of the scented flowers are white or yellow, like the Madonna Lily, Lilium auratum, Lily of the Valley, Jasmine, scented Pæonies, Tree Lupins and Honeysuckle, and these shine in the dusk almost as though they were luminous, and pour out their perfume, while the brighter colours seem to fade into obscurity."

"I always pictured pæonies as being gigantic flowers of pink and red, rustling like paper, but occupying beds and borders on account of their decorative value. I did not realise they were particularly strongly scented," I said, beginning to be troubled by my usual inferiority complex, which always asserted itself in the presence of horticultural knowledge. "Most of the bright colours have no scent, or very little, but varieties like Duchess de Lemours, Marion Cran, Lady Veronica Bruce, and a number of other herbaceous pæonies have quite a good scent; it is the tree pæonies that have no scent and are probably the enormous blooms you are thinking of." She began to move towards the tool shed in a businesslike manner. "Can I give you a hand with whatever you are going to do?" I offered, following behind. "Thursday is the day for soaking the border," she replied, over her shoulder.

"If the weather continues really hot for some days I sprinkle the border late in the evening through the fine rose on the hose just enough to freshen up the leaves a little, otherwise it is not usually necessary; if, however, the summer is as it should be and not torrents of rain every other day, the border is soaked once a week. With a very long border like my husband's, half is done one evening, and the other half the next." She was uncoiling a long, black hose as she spoke. "You will find that to soak the leaves of fruit trees after a long hot day will make a great difference to them when the fruit is swelling." "I haven't got any fruit trees yet," I said, discouraging Beauty from helping with the hose. He lay down on the lawn at last a trifle disgruntled that his offers of help were so firmly refused.

"No, but I am sure you will have, and my husband would be most pleased to help you choose them, I know, if you will slip round before you are about to order them." I thanked her and fastened the end of the hose to a tap in the wall.

"It seems to me rather late in the day to start gardening," I said; "why don't you do a nice cool job like that in the morning?" "Supposing you were to lie sun-bathing on the lawn for two or three hours and then someone came and threw three or four buckets of ice-cold water all over you, what do you think would happen?" "I should probably get a chill," I replied. "Exactly; and yet that is what you are proposing to do to your plants. You would most certainly give them a very bad chill. That is why hosing is done in the evening when the sun is going down and the water will have time to soak in before the sun rises to evaporate all the moisture on the surface again."

"I never knew plants got chills like people," I said. "Of course, I vaguely gathered that if you dig up a plant and leave it lying for two or three nights in the frost that it would wither, but I thought the same thing happened as when you dig it up and leave it lying in the sun. All the water dries out of it or something." "Plants can only live and function round about a certain temperature. The soil keeps that temperature and the plant roots more or less even. Plants which cannot stand a lower temperature lose their leaves in winter and become dormant —that is, the vital parts go into a sort of stupor, like animals when they hibernate. The others protect their leaves from the cold by having a leathery skin like the Laurel, or a woolly covering like the Cerastium leaves, or a surface of wax, like Cabbage leaves, or they curl up so that the surface exposed to the frost is very small, like the pine tree needles; many examples will come straight to your mind."

The water shot out of the straight hose jet, and she raised her voice a little above the noise.

"Many plants which grow in high temperatures protect themselves, funnily enough, in exactly the same manner. You will think of the cactus, which has a very waxy covering; orchids have a leathery covering; but heat does not affect plants so much as cold, except the drought which accompanies it, and as plants lose water by evaporation through their leaves they have adapted

themselves to live in conditions where water is scarce in the most wonderful way. I hope I am not boring you?" "Not at all; I think this is most interesting," I replied.

"Drought can be quite as severe in cold climates as in hot ones," she continued, turning back to the hosing. "It simply means no water available for plants, and when it is frozen it is no more use to a plant than if it wasn't there at all. Many plants, therefore, which grow in places where there is very little water (including parts of the countryside in England) have reduced their leaves to spines, which serve as protection, like—again—the cactus, and in England the gorse; or perhaps, in the case of climbers, to tendrils to help them to climb (many of the pea family have done this), or like a funny wild shrubby plant called Butcher's Broom, where the leaves are represented by a tiny brown scale on a flat green blade, which is really a stem. Some plants save this rapid evaporation on a hot day by folding up their leaves like closed umbrellas; the Acacia trees are particularly good at this. At the base of each leaflet is a little swelling of water. When the sun gets to a certain strength it draws this little globe of water from one side of the stalk to the other, and this causes the leaflets to collapse, or fold up. When the air becomes cooler this drop of water shifts back again and the leaf expands."

"I think this is most interesting," I said. "I shall look at my plants in the future in a new light; they seem almost human."

"In a sense it may be said they respond in the same way as humans to certain conditions. As I have mentioned, they catch cold, they go to sleep in the dark, they become hungry and thirsty, they can be anæsthetised and even made tipsy." I thought this sounded decidedly comic; I asked for further particulars.

"When a human being is put under an anæsthetic all normal functions are slowed up; to all intents and purposes he is asleep, but so deeply asleep that nothing will wake him; a plant anæsthetised ceases to make food from the sunlight and turn it into a sugar solution to be used for growth, which is the everyday work of plants; and, in the same manner as a human being, all the vital processes of a plant are stimulated by alcohol, after which for a time the plant collapses. So you see," she con-

tinued, "if you treat a plant in many ways as you would treat yourself you won't go far wrong."

"That is all very well," I replied, "but I don't remain perfectly still, fixed to the ground, nor do I die down in winter, although I should frequently like to." She laughed. "No, that's quite true, but don't be under the impression that plants are standing still because they are fixed to the ground. Apart from being moved by the wind, their actual growth is nearly always in a sort of spiral movement, while their roots are always on the move—in and out, in and out—in search of moisture and food. If you could telescope a week's growth into minutes you would see every plant in the border swaying about like a looper caterpillar at the end of a twig." The hose was at this moment shifted further down the border.

"When I say they are like people—like yourself, for instance—I mean that they need food and drink, light, air, warmth, sleep, regular treatment and they hate draughts. I have seen many a pathetic subject in a pot in a private house, where the owner has asked me what is wrong with it. When I find out how it has been treated, I know it has got influenza, but is not so noisy about it as human beings."

Switching over to something a little closer at hand, I asked her why she used the straight nozzle of the hose on the border. I always thought that was what the rose was for. Personally, I know I should have dragged the hose out every so often and rosed my way from end to end. "First of all," she said, "a rose only sprinkles the surface soil; this will encourage plants to grow their roots upwards to the moisture, where the hot sun will shrivel them in the daytime. Also, apart from this, you think you have given the plants a good watering (and it has only gone in half an inch), and you wonder why your plants droop on a hot day. If the soil is very dry on the surface the gentle rain from a rose runs straight off it, does not even go down half an inch, so it is a waste of time and water. By using a straight nozzle between the plants you *force* the water into the soil, and you will find that when you have moved up a few yards the first lot of water has already disappeared down into the ground. Secondly, you are using much more water per square yard than with a rose and doing much more good in consequence. Lastly, one good soak once a week is of far more

value than a sprinkle every night, because it penetrates right down into the soil. Sometimes," she continued, "if the soil is exceptionally dry and has formed a crust on the surface, I have to use a small fork with one hand and hose with the other. You must be careful in this case, however, not to expose roots or they will immediately be shrivelled up by the hot sun the following day."

Beauty by this time had given up all hope of ever going home, and was asleep, head on paws, snoring loudly. I thanked Mrs. Chilcott profusely for all she had told me and the help she had given me. "Every time I come here," I said, "I learn so much; you will have to send in your account at the end of the quarter." She smiled.

"Well, it is a subject in which I am deeply interested, but on the broad lines and not as a specialist on any one plant. That is why what you see here is all quite ordinary in the plant line, but plants are all chosen because I like them and not for their rarity or price.

"Come again soon, I have plenty more to show you. There is my little greenhouse you haven't seen yet, and my scented roses. Excuse my not coming to the gate with you." "I will come next Thursday evening, a week from to-day, which is when the border is due again for its weekly bath. I will do the hosing for you and you can sit at ease like a lady and do your embroidery," I said, rousing Beauty with difficulty, and moving to the gate.

"I will buy the silks in readiness!" she called back, and waved her free hand.

Chapter Eleven

POT-POURRI AND GUM BENZOIN

ON the following Thursday, then, I arrived after tea, gloved and overalled, as it were, to find Mrs. Chilcott finishing a late tea.

"Come and sit down and talk to me while I finish," she said, shaking paws with Beauty (a social routine with visitors which, having been taught, he now never forgets, although the biscuit reward is a thing of the past); "my husband has gone down to the club and won't be back till fairly late, so we can discuss frivolities if you feel so inclined."

"It depends what you call frivolities," I replied. "But there is something in this room which smells extraordinarily nice; I don't know whether you would call it frivolous or not"—sniffing rather loudly to get still more of the elusive perfume. "Oh yes, of course; I brought in one of my jars of pot-pourri from the drawing-room; that must be what you smell." "But it is perfectly delicious," I said. "Where on earth do you get such lovely stuff?" "I make it myself," she replied. "I supply all my friends and local bazaars, and send some abroad; actually I make very little nowadays—that bowlful which you say smells so strongly is nine years old, so you see I am coming to the end of my list of friends and acquaintances, although, of course, the bazaars still continue. Like the poor, they are always with us!

"I remember 'Erbert one year helped me to pick the roses."

"You call him 'Erbert,' too, then, do you?"

"I find it impossible sometimes to resist, because he looks like it; the 'H' added to his name would be quite wrong, don't you think so?"

"Well, I do it because Mrs. Ransom always refers to him as 'Erbert, and I seem to fall into it. However, do go on."

"Well, I gave him strict injunctions to take off the flowers in full bloom only and to cut them with no stalk. They were not for cut flowers, and every piece of stalk cut means waste material in this case. I have difficulty enough in persuading my husband to let me have some of his roses to augment my own without having the bushes hacked to pieces into the bargain. When I had finished filling my basket I strolled round to 'Erbert's rose bed, to find a large bunch of roses just coming into bloom with stalks over a foot long neatly laid out on the grass, while the bushes had shrunk to little stubs. Well, I mean to say, what *are* you to do?

"Another time I caught him in the act of cutting down a large fully grown laurel that screens the car washing-yard from the rest of the garden. 'Why on earth are you cutting down this bush?' I asked. 'It will take eight or nine years to get another to grow so big.' 'Got disease, this 'as; never cure this you won't. Cut 'em down.' And he set to again. I had a look at the leaves, which were brown round the edges. 'You turned the hose on this bush when you were washing the car one day; probably the sun was very hot. This is only scorch; the young leaves will come out again quite all right,' I said. 'That's disease, that is,' he said. 'You'll 'ave it all over the garden in no time.' And he marched off grumbling to himself."

"And did the bush recover?" I asked.

"Of course it did. All that was amiss was only cold water on warm leaves. Another time I found him pulling up tobacco plants, carefully put in by myself, thinking they were docks or mullein—I don't know what he thought. Anyway, you have to be on the watch forever with the average jobbing gardener it seems to me. Some people apparently have pearls, but some people are lucky enough to find pearls in oysters. I've never done so.

"Now, about this pot-pourri; I can tell you how I make it if you would care to know, although it will, of course, be some time before you will have large enough plants to make your own. To begin with, it takes from February till the following October to make." "That seems rather a long time," I said. "In other words, as soon as you have given away one bowl as a Christmas present you are making the next Christmas present." "Well, something like that," she replied. "Of

course, the dry pot-pourri does not take nearly so long to make, but then it is not so strong and does not last nearly so long, and if you are paying quite a bit for the spices mixed with it, you may as well have something that is going to last."

She rose from the table. "Let us go and sit in the garden; it is a beautiful evening and I can talk so much better there. I bought a little traycloth and a teapot cosy cover on your advice concerning embroidery, so now you can do one and I will do the other till the sun has moved down a little." So we sat in the garden in the golden sunshine with Beauty lying at our feet, while every now and then I feasted my eyes on the glowing colours of the border, and a thrush or robin would come and splash about in the bird bath or gaze up at us with an enquiring eye. I am afraid the needlework did not progress very quickly.

"I usually use about two bushel baskets of rose-leaves, one basket of sweet geranium and about a quarter of a basket of various scented leaves like Verbena, Bay, Rosemary, anything that has a lasting fragrance, and, of course, Lavender flowers picked when they are just out. The February part of it is to cut orange peel in strips about two inches long and insert cloves point downwards so that the heads are almost touching. These are packed gently but firmly into a jar (not a tin) with sprinklings of salt in between each layer and over the top. The salt consists of equal parts bay salt and kitchen salt, and for the whole pot-pourri I use about six and a quarter pounds of each.

"I then leave this till the rose picking commences. The full-blown roses are used, the petals pulled off, separated and laid out on a large cloth in the shade for about two days. A building of some sort is essential, as there must be no dew or tree drips; if the atmosphere is damp a little longer time must be allowed for drying. The roses should be picked on a dry, sunny day and every petal must be absolutely fresh. When they are shrivelled to about half their size, I take a row of plain white straight-sided quart jugs; commencing on the first one I throw in two handfuls of the petals, press them down, sprinkle with the salt mixture, throw in more handfuls, press, add salt, and so on till each jug is filled and overflowing. I finish up with a cork mat slightly smaller than each jug, with a weight on top to keep the mixture pressed down.

"The same is done with the sweet geraniums, but the other herbs dry so quickly that they need not be spread out in the shade first, but put in jugs straight away. The lavender should be cut when the flowers first open, not later, and must be well dried before being salted. While they are patiently waiting in jugs, I mix together 1¼ packets of Atkinson's Violet powder, ¼ lb. ground Allspice, ¼ lb. ground Cloves and ¼ lb. whole Cloves, ¼ lb. ground mixed Spice, ¼ lb. whole Mace, also ⅛ lb. of ground Mace, ¼ lb. of pounded Gum Stovax and—something else; just a minute—oh yes, ¼ lb. of pounded Gum Benzoin—the stuff I use for my hands."

"How do you mean 'for your hands'?" I interrupted.

"When you come to do a good deal of hand weeding, you will have to do something to keep your hands in reasonable order," she said, pulling out another thread of silk and squinting horribly in trying to thread it. I noticed that her hands were very nice indeed. "Don't you wear gloves?" I asked. "Not if I can help it; so much dirt seems to ooze through in time. In the winter they soon get wet and then are cold; in the summer they are too hot, and I feel very fumbly in any case."

"What about pruning rambler roses?" I asked.

"The only time I wore gloves when cutting out my ramblers, the end of a branch caught in one glove and, springing back, tore it off my hand and flung it into the lily pool, where I left it looking like some strange water plant floating on the surface."

"What do you do for your hands?" I asked, while Beauty regarded with a baleful eye an inquisitive robin nearer on the grass.

"I use a mixture of almond oil, glycerine and benzoin. I wash my hands thoroughly with warm water first and then rub in a cream containing these ingredients made up by the chemist for me. You would be surprised how much dirt still comes out, and it keeps the hands soft and smooth. Cold cream put on and rubbed in by using a rubber nailbrush in a circular movement from the nails upwards and wiped off with soft material afterwards is excellent, but, of course, it is the nails that really get in such a mess. Cuticle oil is marvellous for getting out every speck of dirt and stain round the base of the nail; otherwise just keep your nails as short as you can.

"If you are inclined to rough chapped hands, rub them with

toilet paraffin before you start gardening, and when you wash them after gardening, rub in a little more paraffin, which will fetch out the ingrained dirt and keep your hands soft. Olive oil and Pond's cold cream are both very good for dry skin which is inclined to chap."

"Certainly your hands do not look as though they belonged to someone who did her own garden," I said. "I am sorry to have interrupted you; do go on about the pot-pourri." "Well, the whole lot are well mixed together with the exception of the whole Mace and Cloves, which are put together in another receptacle. By this time we have begun the month of September, and when I am ready the jugs are emptied into a heap, the powders and orange peel are added, and the Mace and Cloves. I turn and turn the heap until it is thoroughly mixed up. I then store it in a large airtight box or a huge jar, well pressed down, and I draw from it to fill bowls when I am ready. And that is all," she concluded. "It sounds easy," I said. "I must try it one day."

"It is not quite as easy as it sounds, but when the time comes I will help you if you wish. There are, of course, various recipes; that is not the only one."

"What colour would you like this girl's dress?" I enquired, proferring the teapot cosy; "it should be the same as your tray cloth if they are to match." "I think I shall do it blue and green. I wonder if flies taste nice?" She broke off, regarding Beauty (who had just snapped up and swallowed his ninth fly) with some meditation.

"It is nice to know that roses have some scent nowadays, even if it's only in the pot-pourri, because they certainly don't seem to have much on the bushes. I don't know why roses have so little scent," I went on, following up a train of thought. "I have been to friends' houses and to flower shows, and buried my nose in a heap of soft glowing petals, but hardly any scent at all could I find." It rather surprised me to hear this good lady's reply to my remark. She had so impressed me with her great love of all old-fashioned garden flowers and her seeming indifference towards latest developments and new breaks that I quite thought I had struck a note to which her type of artistic taste would respond vibrantly. Here I was wrong, for at once she remarked: "Oh, dear; how I wish everybody would stop

repeating the slander against modern roses that they have lost their perfume. It is quite true that away back in 1912 and the few following years when the pernetianas, as a new class, were in the making we did have some varieties introduced which were quite scentless, but they brought us wonderful new colours which flowers had never known before, and something has to be sacrificed when something fresh is to be gained. Raisers, as soon as they got their new colours fixed, set about regaining the perfume they had sacrificed, and now I am quite sure that a new rose without scent stands hardly a ghost of a chance of obtaining the recognition and honours at the hands of the experts, without which a novelty can make no real headway.

"If you are planning to have a rose garden or even a few beds of roses which will bear flowers in abundance in the autumn and are particularly anxious to choose scented varieties, this will, of course, considerably narrow down your choice. It is the vividly coloured orange-scarlets, the flame colours, and deep gold-tinted varieties which so often lack scent; the soft pinks, buffs and creams and the real red roses which carry the sweetest perfumes.

"Personally, I would prefer to do the thing thoroughly, call this part of the garden an 'Old English Garden' (but without the 'Ye') and grow all the varieties of scented roses that I had space for jumbled up together, with brick paths, formal edgings of box and possibly a clipped yew tree or two in the background.

"For the people who regard roses as bedding plants, but require scent as well, however, varieties should be chosen which combine both, and only one variety planted in each bed. Thus a whole rose garden should be planted up with not more than six varieties.

"The following are a few kinds which combine both colour and scent: Etoile de Hollande, Betty Uprichard, Mme. Butterfly, Hadley, General McArthur, Rev. F. Page Roberts and Ophelia.

"For those whose first consideration is scent, there are the following varieties: Portadown Fragrance, Jubilee, Mrs. John Laing, Leading Lady, Bertha Gorst, Dame Edith Helen, Abol, Marchioness of Linlithgow, Etoile de Hollande and Hadley. Dame Edith Helen and the Marchioness of Linlithgow are both noted for their old rose scent, while Portadown Fragrance and Leading Lady have been awarded both prizes and medals especially for their perfume.

"If space will permit, one or two beds might be devoted to the

few hybrid polyantha roses which are scented, such as: Maude Gladstone, Anne Poulsen, Salmon Spray, Yvonne Rabier and Betty Prior. Of these Yvonne Rabier has the strongest scent, a white rose.

"No rose garden should be without a few of the polyantha roses, and although there are very few of these which may be said to possess any scent at all, there are fortunately two of the most desirable which are fragrant. They are Ellen Poulsen and Sunshine. To continue with a collection of scented roses you must, of course, include a few climbers and ramblers. There are various sweetly scented climbers, such as Richmond, Rosemary, Allen's Fragrant Pillar, Mme. Alfred Carrière and Romance, as well as all the climbing forms of fragrant bush roses, but of the list of climbers my selection is undoubtedly Rosemary, which has been awarded a prize for old rose perfume and has the most perfectly shaped buds.

"Among the ramblers there are few scented varieties, although one usually associates ramblers with trusses of close, brilliant flowers and no scent at all. The best of these are Dr. Van Fleet, Sanders White, Cornelia, Mary Wallace, Snowflake and Easlea's Golden Rambler (not quite so strong).

"I am inclined to think that ramblers are much more suitable for arches than climbers. The arch forms a frame for the garden picture, and an even spacing of colour, whether it is the close, dense green foliage or the even mass of flower of the rambler, does provide a more effective frame for the rose garden than the dotted splashes of colour produced by the climbing rose. But that is only my own personal opinion and probably there are many who would disagree with me.

"If you would like a centre-piece, a clipped yew, bird bath or statue would all be in place, but I always have a leaning towards a sundial in the rose garden, even if all the visitors wear watches; on the other hand, to support the idea of a scented garden the focussing point might be a weeping standard in a favourite scented rose variety."

By this time the sun was off the herbaceous border, and out came the hosepipe for me to fulfil my promise to do the watering.

Chapter Twelve

MRS. CHILCOTT'S GREENHOUSE

HORTICULTURE had fairly claimed me for a victim, and, like most young converts, my enthusiasm was master of my mind and reasoning power. I wanted everything that belongs to gardening and had only to see something which I had not got to be filled with strong desire and burning impatience to possess it. The mischief is that when one has that mood no thought is given to such questions as whether time and skill available will be equal to added demands upon them.

This explains why, having seen a greenhouse bright and gay with lovely plants in bloom and others with glorious foliage—I had no idea what these were—I promptly made up my mind that I must have a greenhouse like that, with plants of the same kinds complete.

Luckily for me I disclosed my newly made decision to Mrs. Chilcott, and that wise lady very gently put a damper on my ardour. "My dear," she said, "I know that greenhouse you saw and I know how lovely its plants are, but it is really a hothouse and all the plants are tropical things that require fire heat and very skilful management. A house like that would cost a great deal to maintain, and it would be money wasted without the assistance of a clever gardener."

I must have looked terribly disappointed, because Mrs. Chilcott quickly went on to say: "Of course, there is no reason why you should not have a greenhouse and get a lot of enjoyment out of it; but I think you should be content with a cold house, or one which you can keep clear of frost in winter by using a small, inexpensive and simply managed heating apparatus. I have a little house like that; you did not see into it when you came over, but come again and we will go straight into it, and I will tell you all about what I grow in it and what you can grow, too, if you think a little house like it would satisfy your longing."

That was how it came about that another visit to the Chilcott's was made so soon. Without any preliminaries in the way of invitations to rest or to linger admiring wall climbers that I was gazing at when my hostess appeared, that good lady said: "Come along to the greenhouse; you will find it filled with funny things just because they please me. I leave tomato-growing, raising bedding plants and all that to my husband. You'll find that nearly everything I have is really hardy enough to grow outdoors, but I get them earlier and the fragile blooms of some things are the nicer for being sheltered from winds and storms. I change my programme so that one season's interests differ from another, and I am always trying out some fresh idea to see how it works."

We had reached the greenhouse, half hidden and nicely sheltered behind some evergreens, but open to sunshine for part of the day.

"This year is the scent year," she went on, as we entered. "I have grown a mixed lot of plants all for the sake of their fragrance.

"Here are Lavender, Southernwood, herbaceous Verbena and Sweetbriar—all young plants lifted and potted up in early spring and brought in here when the last of the annuals have retired. They were cuttings the summer before last and grown on quickly; the doors are always wide open, because they are really hardy plants and the house would be much too hot for them if it were closed." Beauty tried to turn round and knocked an empty pot over with a resounding crash. I told him to go outside and wait.

"In between these are smaller pots of lemon-scented thyme, silver thyme and night-scented stock which has to be resown from time to time to keep up a supply; the plants have to be kept pinched to keep them small and bushy."

"What do you mean by 'pinched'? Is that tying them up tight?" I asked.

"Oh no," she laughed, "just the very tip of each stalk nipped out between finger and thumb. It is to make the plants grow bushy instead of tall and straggling."

I did a little surreptitious pinching on my own account and pinned the result into my dress. The scent was intoxicating.

She produced a long-spouted small red can, and, filling it from

the tank under the staging, she sprinkled all the plants and the floorboards. As if by magic the house was filled with scent.

"These plants do not appreciate too much moisture in the air, so I damp down the greenhouse once a day only and am sparing over the watering, but damping down does discourage the white fly, which is such a nuisance in any house."

"What do you do for it if you get it? I have heard people speak of white fly in greenhouses and what a nuisance it can be."

"Fumigating with sodium cyanide is about the best thing I know; there are also various preparations sold for dusting on the floor and staging. Fumigating or dusting should be done once a fortnight. The pests certainly don't like getting wet, and daily syringing is therefore of benefit."

"What do you grow in other years?" I enquired.

"Well, one year it may be Nemesias and Gazanias, which go so well together, with either Nemophila or the annual blue Sedum in front. Another year it may be Schizanthus at the back and Erigeron Mrs. Beale with Phacelia or Matthiola in front. This Erigeron grows about nine inches high and flowers steadily and compactly for six weeks or two months and lasts nearly three weeks when cut and put in water. It is a clear, deep mauve. For a change, along the front I may have Mimulus 'Whitecroft Scarlet' or Phyteuma comosum.

"My third scheme I tried for the first time last year and it was rather successful, although I say it myself. Cup-and-saucer Canterbury Bells, Stocks, the bushy East Lothian kind which go on most of the winter, and Dimorphotheca aurantiaca—a daisy-like flower of rich orange colour. In between I always have a few pots of lemon-scented Geranium or Southernwood, partly for scent and partly for foliage."

"I think it sounds perfectly charming," I said, "but this is certainly a case in point of having to do something the year before last to get results the year after next. I know I should walk into my greenhouse in April and say, 'Now what shall I have here this summer? I think I will have Hydrangeas or Sweet-briar,' and then I shall remember that I should have taken cuttings two years ago."

"Well, that will suit your nurseryman all right, and he wants customers like that, but I think half the joy is in raising one's own plants, and with a greenhouse you can do it if you will

learn to think two years ahead, but act as well as think at the right time."

"I begin to realise why gardening is a whole-time occupation."

"Well, it would be so if your place were large enough, and there is always a danger, as I have often said, of making even a small place too big by overcrowding it and trying too many different phases of the hobby. Anyway, if you do have a little greenhouse of your own there is one thing I urge you to remember —never overcrowd it. It is a great temptation to grow far too many different kinds of plants. Everything you happen to see that you think is pretty you want to add to your own stock. Every time you see a plant with plenty of shoots that will make new cuttings, when once you have learned how to take them and root them, you think you'll put in another batch, but when you get overloaded and have to cram the plants together as close as they will go you'll find that trouble begins and soon multiplies, and a greenhouse can become a source of trouble and disappointment instead of a constant joy.

"But, tell me now, what are your impressions of this little place and its occupants? It is just as well you should think of this, because before you eventually buy your greenhouse you want to have a very clear idea of what you want to grow in it. I know there are not many people who would think of growing the stuff I have here now, but it is because it pleases me that I have it. Perhaps you would rather have plants like begonias or primulas in the summer and autumn and pots and bowls of bulbs in spring?"

"Well, I certainly do like these scented plants, all of them, but then I like so many other kinds of flowers and I am afraid I should be just as you were saying, wanting a bit of everything that I think is pretty whenever I see it. You have made me begin to realise the folly of wanting too much, and, although I want a greenhouse, I certainly don't want to have to burn a ton of coal a week all through the winter to keep up high temperatures for my plants."

"Oh! you wouldn't burn that quantity; about a couple of hundredweights a week would be sufficient to warm a house the size of this one, but, apart from the cost of fuel, there is always the time and inconvenience of being obliged to turn out late at night and early every morning whenever the weather is bad to

stoke up the greenhouse fire. You may sometimes want to spend an evening or even a week-end away from home, and there would be the problem of the greenhouse fire to solve. I think if I were you I should start with an unheated house and for the first season, at any rate, grow some of the plants that I have been talking about, and you could, in spring, get a few dormant tubers of begonias, start them first in trays of soil or fibre, then pot them into small pots and later into six-inch pots, in which they would flower from about midsummer until Michaelmas. Then you could allow them to dry off and store the tubers somewhere out of reach of either damp or frost until the next spring and start them all over again.

"You could have several kinds of primulas that would grow without fire heat, and you might pot up some of the hardy heathers, daphnes and alpine rhododendrons to get flowers, if not actually in winter, at any rate very early in spring. Think about it and we can have a talk another day, but I do think you should make up your mind to take a definite line and be careful to choose something that you really like and can take an interest in.

"I have seen a good many people's houses which might be described as hospitals for sick plants; some people of the rough-and-ready, untidy class use the greenhouse as a sort of junk-room for the garden. A place of that description is better roofed and walled with corrugated iron than glass, but it is all a question of a well-ordered plan, thoughtfully carried out, and you should be able to have something pleasing and pretty almost all the year round, especially if, as a supplement to the greenhouse, you have a couple of good, well-built, roomy frames. I think a frame is an absolutely necessary adjunct to a greenhouse, for it doubles the capacity of the house stages if you have the frame's accommodation for plants which do not for a while need to remain in the house."

I thanked Mrs. Chilcott for all the help she had tried to give me. Honestly, I was a bit disappointed at what I had seen and learnt, but I went home meditating, realising that if I had carried out my first intentions I should have wasted money and had a horribly rude awakening. By the time I reached home I had almost made up my mind that my greenhouse should contain some of the little alpine gems I had seen in pots and pans at the

Royal Horticultural Hall and that I would grow some fuchsias to flower in summer, for I am very fond of these and have read that they can be rested in winter so that no fire heat is required.

My evening task was to hunt up advertisements of greenhouses and try to decide what style and size of building I should obtain.

Chapter Thirteen

RECORDING PROGRESS AT HOME

TOWARDS the end of the summer I paid another visit to the nursery, and my friend the foreman took me round to see the Asters and early border Chrysanthemums.

"If I had a large enough garden I would have one part devoted to Asters and Chrysanthemums," I cried in my enthusiasm.

"Many people do," he replied. "Asters and Chrysanthemums commence flowering in August and go on well into November, but I think a general autumn border is best, because if you include the late-flowering Heleniums and Dahlias and Helianthus you can have a very large variety of plants for a long autumn period. They are all on rather a grand scale into the bargain. If you will come this way I would like to show you the Helianthus and Montbretias."

Helianthus, I found, were golden sunflowers with small black centres moving gracefully at the end of tall slender stems. Some were only four feet high, however, and were double, like huge golden Dahlias.

I was rather surprised that the nursery troubled about Montbretias until I saw them. I had only known a common kind which makes a lot of leaf and only produces small, rather dull flowers, but here I saw what the foreman described as the new hybrids, which carried big sprays of wide-eyed, starry flowers, graduating from palest lemon to deep maroon, and far larger and more decorative than anything I had ever associated with the name.

We passed along the nursery between banks of Dahlias, walls of golden Sunflowers and bronze Heleniums, and finally lost ourselves in a veritable foam of blue and mauve Michaelmas Daisies. Here again the colours graduated from pink to pale blue or white, through purple and blue. Out came the notebook again for half an hour, while the foreman went away to do some watering. At the end of this time I met him returning down the nursery.

"After all," I said, "I have a comparatively small garden; I feel so bewildered when I see all these lovely things and know I haven't room for a quarter of them." "That is always the difficulty of amateurs in some ways," he replied. "At first the nursery scores by selling customers far more plants than they have room for; but disillusionment follows. Many of the plants die from overcrowding or unsuitable treatment, or else the gardener disposes of a few on his own, and the enthusiast loses heart and plants nothing but annuals for the future or else puts down grass. If you will pardon me for suggesting it, you will make a note of the plants you particularly admire, decide how many you have room for in your borders, and choose the number from your particular list."

For the benefit of those planning an autumn garden, then, here is a short list of very attractive kinds and varieties.

Tall Plants

Aconitum Wilsonii, Helianthus Monarch (eight to ten feet high), H. multiflorus "Loddon Gold," Heleniums Riverton Gem and Riverton Beauty, Asters Novæ Angliæ, Barrs Pink, Novi Belgii, Blue Gown, Clivedon, Mammoth, Mount Everest (white), Pink Nymph.

Plants of Medium Height

Aster Amellus King George, Queen Mary, Ultramarine, Wells Favourite, Sonia, A. cordifolius, Silver Spray, A. ericoides Ringdove, A. Novi Belgii Anita Ballard, Beechwood Challenger (red), Petunia, Amethyst.

Montbretia, Joan of Arc, His Majesty, Star of the East. Phlox, Coquelicot, Etna, Elizabeth Campbell, Selma, Le Mahdi, Border Gem, Frau Ant. Buchner.

After a while we came to a large area devoted to frames. Each frame contained rows of pots, some with a neat rosette, others with a cushion of compact growths in the centre.

"What are these?" I asked.

"Mostly alpines for rock gardens," he explained. "Most of them flower in spring or early summer." For years after this I associated alpines with little neat rosettes, and had quite heated

arguments with my friends who assured me that the cascades of purple, yellow and white tumbling over their rockeries or down dry walls were alpines, probably the same as I had seen at the nurseries but in a different stage of growth.

I turned from my inspection of the alpines and remarked to the foreman: "You know, I have made so many mistakes during the short time I have had a garden of my own that I feel rather scared at the prospect of providing a home for these little plants. As to bedding plants, I have already heard allusions to cuttings and layers and protecting in frames in winter, and damping off and other terrible things of which I know nothing. Everyone round here seems so assured and confident and their plants look so happy; I feel all at sea, and I can't even argue with the man who does my rough work for me." He laughed at my perplexity. "I know most of the people with large gardens in the village, and you would be surprised at the mistakes they made when they first started," was his reply.

"If you are really keen to learn and will forgive me for suggesting it, we usually have extra help in the spring for seed-sowing, pricking out, potting and taking cuttings. If you would care to come here for a few hours each day to help with this you would learn what will always be very useful to you in your own garden in a comparatively short space of time. Books and verbal help are a great deal better than nothing, but nothing is equal to practical work under supervision."

I thought this was a most excellent idea and said so, and the following spring I put it into practice and have never regretted it.

"Meanwhile," he went on, "if we can assist you in laying out your garden we should be very pleased."

"But I want to do my own garden myself," I said.

"I know how you feel," he replied; "we have plenty of ladies around here who want to do their own but don't know a great deal about it, and therefore we supply a foreman, who shows them how to prepare and plant their borders, lay the lawns, make rockeries, steps and pools and plant up shrubs and orchards, and also any extra men required for the heavy lifting, but in return for this we expect to supply the materials and plants to your orders.

"You will realise, of course, that it takes a good deal longer to get through a job of work when questions are being answered and

mistakes put right, but if that would suit you we will send our man round in the autumn."

And that was how I came to have Bill for a while during the ensuing weeks.

I always think of him as "Bill" because I never heard him called anything else. Every tradesman that came to the door, if within hailing distance, called out, "How do, Bill?" Mrs. Ransom greeted him like a brother and even 'Erbert heaved stone and barrowed soil a trifle more graciously for Bill.

He was a small, middle-aged man, quick in all his movements, with a quiet voice and a twinkling eye. Nothing ever disturbed or annoyed Bill; he was a hard worker and a monument of tact and patience. He had been in the veterinary corps during the war and told me, "No use getting impatient with horses, you know, Mum—does more harm than good; and when you're in charge of a dressing-station, with shells dropping all round, you've just got to be quiet and show a bit of patience and encouragement or you'd be nowhere now, would you, Mum?" I agreed, but very much doubt if I could have done it, all the same.

During the autumn I had laid in a good stock of oak leaves for the garden by inducing two small boys with a handcart and a large sack to spend their Saturday afternoons bringing me in well-pressed loads in return for a small remuneration and a very large tea. Barrowing leaves from the heap to put in each trench as 'Erbert dug was a task I enjoyed. After the wind had emptied the barrow for me and strewn the garden with the contents I decided that a couple of boards about two feet long and nine inches wide were best for loading the barrow from the heap and, laid on top of the load, kept the wind from blowing them away. One could pick up a far greater quantity at a time, and it was much cleaner for the hands. 'Erbert then "incorporated pig manure," as they say in the textbooks, and a few days later Bill arrived with the plants I had ordered.

He showed me a plan which he had made out. "Many people don't bother about having a plan," he said, "but I think it saves time in the end. I have drawn it by the measurements you sent to the nursery and have allowed roughly three to four feet square for the tall plants (five to eight feet high), and two to three feet for medium plants, while the dwarf plants have one to one and a half feet square. Actually the spreading, cushiony type of

"Two small boys with a handcart."

dwarf plant takes up just as much room as a spire-shaped medium plant like Sidalcea or Lychnis, but these measurements will give a rough idea." And he began walking methodically all over the border.

"Why are you doing that?" I asked.

"Well, you see, Mum, your soil is light and the oak leaves have made it all springy and loose. You don't want it all sinking after you have planted it up; besides, herbaceous plants and all other things like to be planted firmly and you can't do that unless the soil is firm to start with." Here came a word from 'Erbert.

"Told you that, Ma'am, when you was plantin' they cabbages larst month. Went down whole row (turning to Bill) pullin' a leaf of each and up they come like lightenin'! I did tell you (turning to me) leaf should break away first rather than plant should come up." "Yes, I know, but it seemed cruel to press them in with my heel or the handle of the spade, or even the trowel handle."

"Like to be fair pounded they do; me faither used to stamp about like 'e was in a rage, and I never did see such cabbages as me faither's, woppin' great things with hearts like cannon-balls."

Bill again chimes in: "All the cabbage family—broccoli, Brussels sprouts, etc.—like to be planted very hard, and in the flower garden take it as a general rule that any flower with four petals cannot be planted too firmly. This applies to stocks and wallflowers, which belong to the same family as the cabbages." And Bill went on walking up and down.

Having donned a pair of stout shoes I commenced at the other end and tramped hard until we met. "Always keep a spade handy or a label in your pocket to scrape off the soil from your shoes before you make a mess of the path," he said; and at his request I sent Beauty for the requisite implement for removing the clogged soil from my footwear.

I raked the border all over while he laid all the plants out in a long row on the lawn and commenced unpacking them. When I had finished I wrote the names on small painted wooden labels with an indelible pencil, as he placed them in their positions in the border.

"You will get a better and quicker display of colour if we plant in groups of three or four as I have allowed in the measurements, and also it is easier to check any plants that die or dis-

appear if you see only two where there should be three, otherwise the missing one is apt to be forgotten until there are large, noticeable gaps, and it is difficult to recall the plants that are gone in a large border."

The border took two days to plant up, and the plants on the lawn were kept covered with a sack overnight.

"Never allow the roots of plants to become dry; if anything arrives from a nursery with dry roots, soak thoroughly in water until the roots are firm and no longer shrivelled. Always cut off with a sharp knife any damaged roots there may be; this applies mainly to trees, shrubs and roses, of course."

When all the plants were spread and the border was covered I noticed he commenced planting at one end and worked backwards. For all plants, except those with flat, spreading roots like the Michaelmas Daisies, he plunged the spade in the ground upright with the back of the spade away from him, pulled the spade and soil forward, and held it, placed the plant in against the firm wall of a hole and, releasing the displaced soil, let it fall back into the hole. Each plant was put in correctly with firm, quick movements, and when he had planted a certain number he went over them, pressing each one with one or two firm treads, not more.

I planted up the smaller ones myself, trying the same method, and learnt to use a light spade quickly and neatly and had no difficulty in believing the truth of the saying that a good gardener can do most things in a garden given a good spade.

Bill and 'Erbert planted up the shrubs and trees in the spaces I suggested, and the place really began to look like a garden. I watched Bill insert a stout stake close to each flowering tree, but not so near as to damage the roots, and a strip of sacking was tied round each trunk to prevent the tarred twine cutting into the bark. The fruit trees were planted in the same way, but half a barrow-load of stones was tipped into each hole destined to contain a plum or cherry tree. "Why?" I asked. "Stone fruit is inclined to make a very strong and deep tap root, and when that happens the tree makes correspondingly strong growth, shooting straight up towards the sky but bearing no fruit. Stones or brickbats are usually put in the bottom of the hole to discourage the roots from making downward growth. Occasional mulching with manure during the

summer for all your fruit trees will help to encourage a good growth of fibrous surface roots, the essential roots for moderate growth and good fruit." I noticed, nevertheless, that he was mixing a little manure with the soil as he filled in the holes, firming the ground with his feet after each four or five spadefuls had been thrown in.

"Always avoid direct contact of manure with plant roots. The manure in solution is stronger than the plant sap and draws out the sap through the thick skin of the roots. That is one reason why only plants which have adapted themselves to living near salt marshes or on the seashore can grow at all on account of the very strong salt solution present in the soil and sand. They have had to grow an extra thick covering to their roots and that makes it difficult for them to draw in water. Most of those plants have a dry, spiny kind of appearance, or else they store the little water they have in thick, fleshy stems heavily coated with wax."

"What an astonishing amount you know," I said, regarding Bill with respect.

"Only because ladies must always have a reason for everything and they ask such extraordinary questions. I have to supply the answers; it is my job. I spend many winter evenings turning the pages of books that deal with such matters, and surprisingly interesting I have found them, too."

Chapter Fourteen

BILL CONTINUES TALKING

I SOON found that Bill was a bit of a raconteur in his way. He had been a jobbing gardener for a time and he gave me a few glimpses of the other side of the picture while we worked.

"You would be surprised at the strange things employers do and expect," he said. "I remember one old lady in particular who used to meet me on the doorstep clad in a dressing-gown and curl papers and clasping a huge alarm clock. One morning—the only one—I arrived three minutes late; that evening she came out at five minutes to five and said, 'William, you need not put away the tools till after five to-day. You were three minutes late this morning!' She never failed to remind me of that every week.

"She had once had burglars and evidently had never got over it. She had three large, fat spaniels, and these had their beds one at the front door, one at the back door and the third against the conservatory door leading into the garden. I always had to pass through the house to the back garden, and there were six doors to be unlocked before me and locked again behind me every time I went through.

"After her breakfast in the summer she used to seat herself in the empty conservatory with her hat and gloves on and a sunshade over her head and watch me work. She had a telephone installed, but she refused to have her name in the book or tell her friends or tradesmen the number. The telephone was only to call up the police in case of emergency. She had a large lawn and insisted that a wide strip all round it should never be cut, 'As it is essential that the dear doggies have a plentiful supply of fresh grass whenever they require it.'

"Another lady regarded me as three in one, so to speak. Besides looking after the garden, I had to fetch the coal, wash the car, mend the swing for the children, call the cat, bring in the

washing, bath the dog and mend the wireless, and her usual expression at the end of the day was, ' Let me see, William, what have you done?' "

Herbert, of course, accompanied this amusing monologue with grunts of approval, and as my back was aching at this point I stood up and leant on my spade, while Bill continued to put in plants with lightning rapidity, talking steadily at the same time.

" It was while I was in this town I realised that gardening is divided into various branches in this way: there are the Landscape gardeners, the Market gardeners, the Nurserymen, the private garden owner and the person who has to keep a garden neat and bright right in the town. This last generally includes the care of room plants and window-boxes, and that is almost a science in itself, as even the tools are often quite different, and a good knowledge of what will grow in towns and how to improve the conditions as far as possible is so necessary.

" For the pots and window-boxes old spoons and forks from the kitchen, a blunt pencil, a pair of scissors, a bucket or basket and a jug are quite often the main tools, while the strangest receptacles are commissioned for carrying soil up and down flights of stairs. One family I knew used their back room window-boxes as a nursery bed, while the front room boxes were used for display. When the time came to shift over the contents of the two boxes there would be trails of soil all through the flat, and some usually descended on to the head of anyone passing along the pavement below. When this happened the family retired behind the curtains till the victim had passed on.

" At one time I worked for about two years in one of the smokiest towns in the Midlands, and you would be surprised how effective they made some of their little gardens.

" One man I got to know rather well told me how he used to syringe everything in the garden at least three times a week in the summer to wash off all the dust and soot. ' Must give your plants a chance to breathe,' he would say. Then he used to remove the top two inches of his soil every two years, spread some well-rotted manure over it all, and cover with fresh soil. He used to get a man with a small lorry to bring a load of soil and half a load of manure and take away with him the old soil he had removed. He used to say that the dust and soot, as well as the rain, made a sour crust all over the surface of his garden

and that it was better taken right away. About once in four years he would cover the ground with lime till it looked like a heavy snowstorm. All this was done in winter, and he even syringed on warm winter days.

"In spite of all his care," continued Bill, "he used to say that people should choose plants which would grow best in towns, in any case, to get the best results. That little tip induced me to make a list of the plants which I found did remarkably well if they were reasonably looked after, even in the middle of a smoky town. Perhaps you would like to have a look at it?"

"I should, very much," I replied. "I will bring it along," he said.

"Of course," he went on, "another difficulty about town gardens is that there is often a passageway between two houses, where there is a permanent draught, and only things like Laurel, Aucuba or Laurustinus will survive for very long, particularly if it is in shade. Also, bricks and mortar soak up a great deal of moisture just when the garden needs it."

Next day Bill brought me the list of plants, and had added to it, very kindly, a list of plants for rooms and for window-boxes. I tried many at different times since then, and gradually learned useful lessons.

The main difficulty about plants in a room is the comparative lack of light, and for this reason ferns on the whole do better than most plants, but in addition we have Grevillea robusta, Fatsia japonica, usually called Aralia or Castor Oil plant, Araucaria excelsa, Dracæna indivisa, Asparagus plumosus and A. Sprengeri and, of course, Aspidistra. These are all green foliage plants.

Plants of a less permanent nature, and particularly those that flower, require the maximum of sunlight available in a room. Some good room plants are the Vallota, Amaryllis, Zonal and Ivy-leaved Pelargoniums, Musk, Campanula isophylla and a perfectly flat plant called the Bead plant, which covers itself with orange berries in season exactly like coral beads (Nertera depressa). Lastly come the temporary plants, which are brought in during the flowering period only and removed immediately after—Cinerarias, Primulas, Azaleas and spring bulbs, etc.

With regard to window-boxes, it is a much better plan, if possible, to have two boxes for each window, one coming on or

going off and kept in the greenhouse or the garden and the other in full flower in the window. This dispenses with the untidy period while the plants are getting established. Constant waterings and syringings are necessary, and the box should be raised up off the sill to allow a free circulation of air and clear passage of drainage water.

Among the best dwarf plants there are Ageratum, Lobelia, French Marigold, Campanula carpatica, Begonia semperflorens, Pansy, Viola, Nemophila and Phacelia. The medium plants may be Petunias, Calceolarias, Zonal Pelargoniums, Calendulas, Gazanias, Stocks, Asters, Mignonette, Nigella, Nemesia, Wallflowers or spring bulbs. Trailing plants to hang down over the box in the front can be Nasturtium, Lobelia gracilis, Campanula isophylla, Ivy-leaved Pelargonium or Lithospermum prostratum (this last must be a permanent fixture).

There are really plenty of plants which will grow in town gardens—most of the hardy easy-to-grow border plants and practically all the bedding plants obtainable in boxes—if a little trouble is taken in looking after them once they are put in.

Trees.—Lime, Elm, Plane, Acacia, Mountain Ash, Holly, Tree of Heaven (Ailanthus glandulosa) and the Golden Elder.

Shrubs.—Euonymus, Privet, Holly (as a shrub), the Flowering Currant (Ribes sanguinea), Forsythia, Guelder Rose, Laurustinus (Viburnum Tinus), Veronica Traversi, Hypericum calycinum, Aucuba, Laurel, Berberis Darwini, Cotoneaster Simonsi, Daphne Mezereon, Kerria japonica (single and double).

Herbaceous Plants.—Aconitum, Erigeron, Aster (perennial in variety), Helianthus, Border Chrysanthemum, Campanula persicifolia, Geum, Heuchera, Veronica, Solidago, Potentilla, Anchusa, Rudbeckia, Iris, Evening Primrose (Œnothera biennis), Ranunculus acrisflore pleno, Helenium pumilum, Sedum spectabile, Saxifraga umbrosa (London Pride), Saxifraga (Megasea) in several varieties, Polygonum (several sorts), Nepeta (Catmint), Hollyhock, Honesty, Funkia, Solomon's Seal (Polygonatum multiflorum), Lythrum, and, of course, practically all bulbs.

These lists could be extended further, but it is better to have a reasonable number to choose from at the start or one becomes bewildered. It will be thereafter a case of deciding from what one sees doing well in other gardens what further plants shall be introduced. Much use can also be made at the start of such

annuals as dwarf and tall Nasturtiums, Calendulas, Sweet Alyssum, Convolvulus (dwarf and tall), Limnanthes Douglasii and Nigella Miss Jekyll. Antirrhinums, too, are good town garden plants.

For wall climbers choice may be made from Jasmine (white or yellow kinds), Clematis montana, Kerria japonica, Pyratha japonica, Cydonia japonica or some good variegated Ivies.

Chapter Fifteen

MAINLY CONCERNING FRUIT

THE Chilcotts had been over to me once or twice during the autumn and, among other things, had made good friends with Beauty, who by now had grown to be a fine dog.

"Great Heaven! What on earth is this?" was the Colonel's remark on being introduced. "Looks like a compressed mastiff."

"That's about what he is," I said, "except that he is brindled and not fawn."

"Very fine dog, all the same; not a bad idea, as you live more or less alone."

"He has been rather useful with tramps calling at the door," I said; "he just puts his nose round the door-post and they say a hurried 'Good morning!'"

"Wonder you don't have the garden littered with bones, all the same."

"Oh dear no; he has his own corner of the garden, where all the bones are buried and dug up again from time to time, when they have become sufficiently tasty."

"I see, rather a case of:

> "I sometimes think that never blows so red
> The Rose as where some buried Cæsar lies
> That every Hyacinth the garden wears
> Dropt in its Lap from some once lovely Head.
>
> And this delightful herb whose tender Green
> Hedges the River's Lip on which we lean
> Ah! Lean upon it lightly, for who knows
> From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen!"

"How utterly revolting!" I said.

He laughed. "I thought you would like that bit of application," he replied.

Beauty did not think much of the Colonel. In any case, he never cared for men, but he liked most women and made great friends with Mrs. Chilcott, who (later on) used to sit and hold his paw by the hour. He also had a great fancy for small children and babies, and he used to peer into every perambulator we passed in the village. The small children were not in the least alarmed, but the accompanying grown-ups usually had to be pacified.

I was beginning to know so much by this time that I was almost able to keep my end up and express an opinion and even contradict the Colonel, for which I felt I deserved a medal. It came about in this way:

They wandered over my little acre and came across a large patch of poppies and yellow daisies which had seeded themselves.

"Whatever have you got here?" boomed the Colonel. "Don't you or Herbert ever do *any* weeding?"

"Those have been left in intentionally," I said, "I think they are perfectly lovely. To do him justice Herbert did want to root them up, but I pointed out that there were plenty of weeds all over the garden he could start on first and leave me to enjoy this wealth of scarlet and gold—I had the greatest difficulty in stopping him pulling them all up."

"I should think so, too. You women are all alike; must have flowers of some sort, even if they are weeds!"

"I have read that weeds are plants in the wrong place, and as there is nothing else in that piece of ground, they cease to be weeds. Anyway, I like them," I concluded with an air of finality, waiting for the storm. However, he only grunted and moved on, while his wife smiled at me.

The Colonel's next remark was, "It is about time you made up your mind what you are going to do about fruit trees. You had better come over to my place and have a look at the apples in the fruit room, and you can make up your mind which kinds will suit you. There is room for a couple of dozen trees here if you want them." So later Beauty and I got out the car and drove over to the Chilcotts' lordly mansion. Beauty had sobered down sufficiently by this time to keep strictly to lawns and paths in other people's gardens, or to follow me closely. We followed the Colonel meekly round the large piece of ground in which he grows all his fruit.

"I would like you to notice the different shapes of the trees here and see which you would find most suitable. You can grow apples, pears, plums and cherries as standards, half-standards or bush trees, but standards are more suitable for large orchards or commercial fruit growers, as they take up much more room and the fruit is rather inaccessible. Personally, I grow my apples and pears on bush or pyramid trees. The bush has, as you see, a short trunk about eighteen inches high and then a spreading head of branches, while the pyramid has one main stem with branches springing from it. These types of trees are easy to prune and spray and the fruit is more or less within reach. They should be planted from twelve to eighteen feet apart.

"Plums, I find, are better grown as half-standards; the clear main stem, three feet high, allows the branches to droop with weight of fruit without dragging on the ground and soiling the plums. The Victoria, in particular, is inclined to exhaust itself with heavy cropping and sometimes never recovers; it should not be allowed to bear too heavily for this reason. When the plums are small and green, thin them out by snipping with a pair of sharp scissors, leaving one where there was a bunch. The tree will then bear year after year. The same may be said of the apples. Leave one, occasionally two, apples on each spur, and with careful attention to pruning and occasional feeding you should get a moderate crop of apples year after year, except when late spring frosts ruin the blossom. A few varieties do not come into bearing at all till they are a certain age, like the Blenheim orange, but then that is no one's fault; simply a peculiarity of the variety.

"Cherries I find easiest on pyramid trees or bush, as they are a more convenient size for netting. Remember when putting nets over to protect the fruit from the birds to leave them on as short a time as possible, or the branches grow through the netting and are a fearful job to free. Oh, it is worth while to mention that a trained tree of the Morello or Pie cherry will fruit quite well on that wall of yours which faces north.

"Of course, there are many other shapes of trees, but these are the most useful for the moderate-sized garden, except for walls and trellises. A south or west wall can take a peach or apricot if you have enough of other fruits elsewhere. Pears are sometimes trained against walls, but the average house and garden hasn't many

walls to spare. The stone fruits grow on fan-trained trees, while pears may be espalier or palmate verrier. You can look those up in the textbooks!" he said, twinkling.

"I have heard of 'cordons,' what are they?" I asked. "They seem to be only one stem, is that right?"

"They may be one, two or three stems and trained upright, horizontally or obliquely, but the horizontal ones are used as a profitable edging for the kitchen garden, and they are all used for producing rather special fruit. Each year most of the young growths are cut off to keep them to one stem and they are grafted on to what is known as a dwarfing stock to discourage the growth of strong twigs and branches. Come along to the fruit room."

I followed into a large, airy shed stacked from floor to ceiling with shallow wooden trays filled with fruit. The bottom of each tray consisted of stout laths with a space between each and the fruit was laid in a single layer, not touching. The trays were neither painted nor varnished; they pulled in and out of a light framework just like drawers.

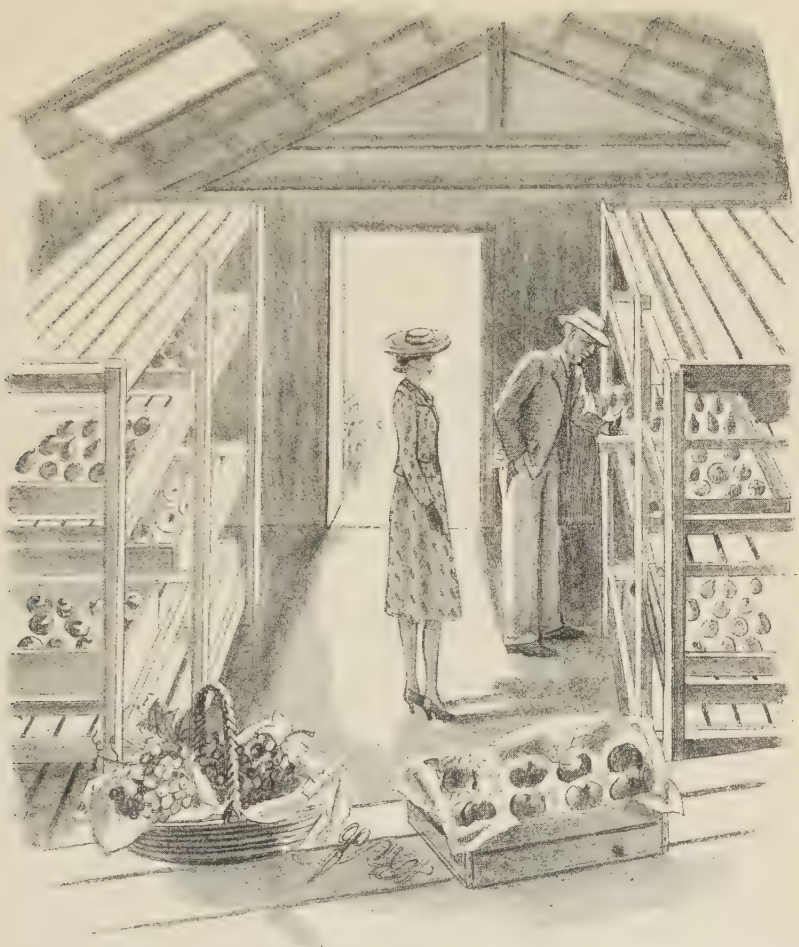
"The whole point in storing fruit is to keep it as dry as possible, with a free circulation of air. Apples should be quite cool, but dessert pears are best in a moderately warm temperature. Quick-ripening fruit like plums, cherries, early apples and pears, etc., are eaten soon after they are gathered, and in any case the air is usually fairly dry, but for winter storing where there is no proper fruit room and the only place is in the house the attic is by far the coolest and driest part for the purpose."

"How do you know what apples will keep and what won't?" I asked. "I would like to have some good keeping apples; they are so useful during the winter." "Nurserymen's catalogues tell you that plainly enough," he answered.

"If I were you I would have about a dozen bush apple trees of varieties which ripen in succession, three cherry trees, two pear trees for dessert and one for cooking, three eating plums and one cooking, one fan-trained apricot, and one fan Morello cherry. You may not need as many as twelve apples; plant eight to start with and add next year if you wish."

He walked to a tray and showed me some yellow-and-red apples that looked most tempting, and moved on to exhibit the contents of the other trays while he talked.

"Do not think that size is the most important thing about



"Come along to the fruit-room"

fruit," he said, "any more than it is with bulbs. Any part of a plant that is storing food, whether for itself or for someone else, should be of a good weight and firmness if it is to keep. As a rule the very heavy apples are the ones which keep till March or even April, whereas the light fruit, or the fruit which has swollen rapidly on the tree, will be most likely to wrinkle and rot rather fast.

"Beauty of Bath and Irish Peach are excellent early dessert varieties; James Grieve and Blenheim Orange (if you don't mind waiting a little) are excellent for mid-season, James Grieve on the early side and the Orange from November to February. Kings Acre Pippin and Lord Hindlip are excellent late eating apples, going on into April. For the cookers, Early Victoria is very early and very creamy when cooked, Grenadier and Lord Grosvenor are also excellent. For mid-season we have Golden Spire as one of the best cookers and a most prolific apple for small gardens. It is not at all bad to eat, either, if you don't mind a little sharpness."

He drew out a long-shaped yellow apple, slightly flushed with red: "Golden Noble, also excellent for restricted space, and Stirling Castle. For late cookers the best to my mind is Lanes Prince Albert—just feel the weight of this." And I received a small green cannon-ball (not small for an apple, but certainly small for a cannon-ball). "After that Edward VII., which goes on till June, and Bramleys Seedling. Well, those I recommend for your garden, and they are none of them liable to canker."

"What about nuts?" I asked. "I would so like to have some."

"You can grow some, if you wish, but they like a sheltered hillside and plenty of stones to grow really well."

"Perhaps those were the shrubby green things I saw at Vicar George's, then?" I said.

"Yes, he has both stones and hillside, and has more nuts than he knows what to do with; he supplies most of his neighbours. We usually exchange fruit, six peaches or a small bunch of Alicante grapes for two pounds of nuts." And the Colonel moved on to some more trays filled with pears, chuckling to himself as though he liked his side of the bargain.

"Pears are temperamental things—they both bear and won't bear for no apparent reason; that's why I should not recommend

more than three and see how you get on. Of the dessert——" "I must of course, have a 'Williams'," I chimed in when he paused a second. "Of course, but you wouldn't if you knew better, but, anyway, be polite to a pear and give it its full title, 'Williams' bon Chrêtien,' and also Josephine de Malines, which will keep till spring. Of the cookers I should certainly have Catillac, as it bears well and keeps until spring also."

"Thank you for all this," I managed to squeeze in; "but will you kindly tell me what you meant by your remark about Williams' bon Chrêtien? I thought everybody recognised that as the best of all pears." "Fiddlesticks," blurted the Colonel. "The 'everybody' who says that are just those people who don't know one pear from another. That's only a schoolboy's pear compared with some. Wait till you have tried Laxton's Progress, Durondeau or Marie Louise; you will know what I meant then.

"I cannot, of course, show you the plums and cherries, as they are over, but I will try and describe them. First of all——" "I must have a Victoria," I chimed in again. "Of course—no description. Then a good purple, like Ickworth Imperatrice, which keeps longer than most, or Purple Gage——" "Talking of gages," I interrupted again, "I must have a greengage." "Of course," he assented (it was getting rather like the chorus of a comic opera). "Well, there you are, then, unless you prefer a greengage that is a bit later, like Late Transparent Gage. Well, now the cherries. Come along to the small fruit while I try to pick out some cherry varieties; there are so many equally good it is not very easy." We strolled down the kitchen garden, now half full of cabbages and broccoli in neat rows.

"I think really May Duke, Late Duke and Early Rivers would be best," he said at length. "Oh, but half a minute, though; I was forgetting a most important point. Most cherries are not only self-sterile, but, unlike apples, they are very particular as to what they will cross with. May Duke will cross with Morello, so you will be all right there; Early Rivers and Late Duke will not cross, so you had better have Waterloo instead of Late Duke."

"Oh dear, oh dear," I wailed. "I shall never, never learn all there is to know about gardening." "You certainly will not; nobody ever has done," came the blunt reply. "And a jolly good thing, too; there would be no fun in it with nothing left to learn."

We came to rows of gooseberry bushes, raspberries all tied up neatly to a horizontal wire and loganberries trained as I had been taught to train rambler roses.

"Remember that gooseberries like to be cool and moist round their roots. Dig in plenty of leaves, rotting manure and plant them in the dampest part of the kitchen garden and they will do well. A little cow manure, if you can get it, will help considerably. If you want a good variety which will keep—it seems to me that fruit that will keep is essential in a small family—Red Warrington is a good bearer into the bargain. You ought also to have Careless, a big green berry, for bottling."

"If you recommend a good yellow gooseberry you need not worry about whether it will keep or not, because it will be eaten straight off the bushes," I remarked.

"Well, I won't bother, then, but recommend two, so that one will be coming into bearing as the other leaves off. Unfortunately the hospital is a good way off, so you had better stock your medicine-chest with something to correct stomach troubles before your gooseberries appear. Well, now, Golden Gem and Langley Beauty would suit you. It is just as well to keep black cotton over them during the winter; there are plenty of birds about and it is most effective. The bullfinches regard the buds as a savoury or *hors d'œuvre*, I don't know which." He moved on down the lines.

"Raspberries you know how to prune, don't you? But they, too, like a rich, moist soil, so they grow well together. Don't forget, however, to cut them well back the first spring after planting and sacrifice any possible fruit the first summer, and personally I find I get better fruit by keeping the canes about half their full height.

"I should think you would find loganberries rather useful along your fences," he went on, "and they do not require such a rich, heavy soil. At least, they like a rich soil and a fair amount of feeding, but it need not be so heavy and moist. You will have to look out for the raspberry beetle if you plant either." "Is that anything to do with that horrible grub you find in raspberries sometimes?" I asked, reminded rather forcibly of the numbers I feel sure I have eaten in entire ignorance until I actually saw one in the dish before me, when the feast was over so far as I was concerned.

"Yes," he said, "the grubs also move from flower to flower, not content to remain in one only; all you can do is to destroy the beetles by spraying the flowers with a preparation containing derris. There are some good brands, and these are safer than lead arsenate, which was formerly the only thing to do the job, but it is poisonous and should only be used by those who know all about how and when to use it. Use the derris spray weekly so long as any white petals are on any flowers or embryo fruits. An alternative plan is to smear some sacks with tar and spread them round the roots in June, and on a quiet day shake the canes well and you will catch quite a lot of beetles. Lime and soot on the roots in the autumn, raked in, will also help."

"I think I will leave the sack performance to Herbert," I said; "I don't relish that very much."

"No, but you may as well know what should be done, and the same method applies to the turnip flea beetle, which is such a nuisance also."

"What about currants?" I asked, determined to get my money's worth (and all for nothing). "You can grow currants very successfully between your fruit trees: allow just a little more room between the trees. The gooseberries are better somewhere by themselves, or you will get torn to pieces when picking the apples and pears."

"If any," I murmured.

"Why do you say that? If you give your fruit trees proper pruning, moderate feeding and other attentions when required you should have plenty of fruit. Cherries and plums like a good dressing of lime as soon as the blossom has fallen, because the fruit will not form properly till the stone is made and the trees want lime to help to form the stone. Anyway, to continue. You cannot choose better than Davison's Eight, or September Black for your Black Currant variety, and Laxton's Perfection or Red Dutch for Red Currants, and White Dutch for the white. The worst and most common pest is the Magpie Moth, which delights in gooseberries also, for a change; you can only spray in autumn and spring. Sometimes aphis infest the leaves, in which case the soft soap and paraffin will dispose of them. If the leaves are very much curled, however, it is better to cut off and burn the shoot."

"What about this pruning?" I asked.

"You know, you are as bad as the average small boy at asking

questions; at the best I can only show you roughly what to do because each tree varies, but I was coming to that, anyway."

He led the way back to the apple trees.

"I find that there is so much to be done in the garden during the summer that I rarely have time for summer pruning, and with bush and standard fruit trees I think winter pruning alone produces excellent results. When you are pruning a tree like this" (and he pointed to a vigorous bush tree), "the points to remember are to keep a sharp look-out for canker or aphis, to keep the centre of the bush open to the sun, to shorten back all side growths to two or three buds, and the leading growths by one-third, always cutting to a bud which points outwards as far as possible."

"I have heard the last part of that about bush roses," I said.

"Bush roses are really trees, and so are gooseberries, so the pruning is almost identical, although the stone fruit like plums, peaches, cherries, etc., resent being cut about, and succumb rather easily to a disease called Gumming, particularly, I find, when branches of the trees have been cut. There is no cure but to cut off all the attacked shoots, feed the tree and sacrifice a year's fruit by taking it all off so that it can devote its vitality to curing itself. You will see it sometimes on flowering, ornamental plums and cherries as well. Anyway, prune as little as possible beyond keeping the centre open and, of course, cut out any dead wood immediately. By the way, remember that string, raffia and dead wood blunt the best of knives, so always keep an old knife or small saw for this, and cut down to the living wood with the sharp pruning knife." He fetched two boxes from the path and motioned me to be seated. "This is going to take some time," he explained.

"Tell me more about the canker and aphis," I asked.

"That usually occurs with older trees that have been neglected," he went on. "Do tell me about those trees," I said eagerly. "I should love to arrive at a friend's house with all the paraphernalia and magically cause her trees to bear where they never bore before. So impressive!"

"Canker and woolly aphis (or American Blight) frequently go hand in hand. The aphis is a sucking insect and causes open wounds, the canker fungus enters and gradually causes the decay of the living tissues. A neglected tree will have been allowed to

grow branches which are not needed, and in this case, of course, whole branches have to be sawn out; also it will probably have grown a certain amount of lichen. The best treatment for the average tree of this sort—provided, of course, that there is still a good deal of vitality left in it—is to commence by sawing out all unwanted branches and then use a knife to cut back the remainder. Then go over the tree carefully and cut out every fraction of dead tissue on the branches, painting each cut with Stockholm tar. Any aphis you may find (in winter a good deal will be under loose bark) brush with a soft brush dipped in methylated spirit, and lastly scrub the moss and lichen with a stiff brush dipped in lime sulphur solution, which you buy in tins and dilute.

"Lime the soil all round, put a wide mulch of manure on in April, and allow the tree to grow rather than make fruit for that year. If a tree is rather badly diseased, cut out the diseased branches first and it may not be necessary to do any thinning. Burn all the rubbish.

"I have rejuvenated old trees by taking out the centre branches and cutting back the remainder half way or so. In this case the tree was allowed to grow all the fresh young wood it was capable of producing for three years or so and after that the trees were pruned lightly with the knife. They bear very fine fruit now," he concluded, rising.

"You have certainly told me a tremendous amount," I said, "and thank you very much."

"Only bare essentials, believe me. Come and have some coffee."

"Just a minute; lend me your pruning knife for a second, will you?" I pleaded.

"Don't expect me to leave you alone among my trees with a pruning knife," he said.

"Just show me how to prune these young trees," I said; "all the leaves are off." So he showed me and let me do some of it myself.

"Cut just above a bud pointing outwards, and pull the knife through with a sharp jerk. That will make a clean cut. Start at the bottom and work upwards, and don't go wandering all round the tree." I was making a cut here and a cut there, thoroughly enjoying myself. "Look how long it will take you if you go round and round the tree and are not sure what you have

cut and what you haven't. Start at the bottom of one branch and work your way up it to the end."

After I had done three trees my arms were aching with reaching upward and my eyes, I feared, would have permanent crows' feet. Coffee seemed to me an excellent idea. As we approached the house I heard sounds of hammering in the distance. "That's my wife," he replied to my raised eyebrows, "hammering in her wretched nesting-boxes. Seems to think the garden is nothing but a birds' playground. Feeds them, waters them, provides them with houses and even spring-cleans for them, by Gad!"

We approached the house and met the maid coming over the lawn to announce tea. "Tea-time, by Jove, so it is. I've been longer than I thought. Hope you've learnt something in all that time."

Mrs. Chilcott was rolling down her sleeves, and collecting hammer and nails and pieces of board. "Mary, where did you get that wood from?" "I saw it in the big greenhouse, dear; it was just what I wanted."

"That's the wood I bought to mend the staging that idiot Tom fell through a week ago," he roared across the grass. "Silly young fool put steps on the staging by the peach tree, carried up a full pail to wash down the glass; the cord wasn't taut, down came the steps, the bucket and Tom all through the staging, down came the main part of the peach tree which he clutched in falling, which was much worse. Don't know what lads are made of these days —haven't any sense, ought to be put in the army." "Yes, dear," said his wife, "shall we go in to tea?"

During tea I asked the good lady more about these nesting-boxes. "I would love to bring up families in the garden," I said. This remark started a big story from Mrs. Chilcott, who began: "Some birds like the 'hole in the wall' type of nesting-box, and others the 'open tray' type. Certainly they appreciate these boxes provided for them, and I have quite a number dotted about near the house. In the autumn I take them all down and clean them out and store them in a dry shed for the winter. In February I dust a little sawdust or sand in each and hang them up again. During the next two months they are all occupied.

"Then again I love to watch the birds feed. I also have a very nice Persian cat. I feel a little alarmed about bird tables, and so I buy a sort of hanging bird table made for me by the

village carpenter. Nothing could be simpler. Two circles of wood are cut off the end of a tree about a foot in diameter, just like two slices of bread off a sandwich loaf; these are then joined together by three short lengths of the cheap chain you can buy by the yard at the ironmonger's, and a ring is put in the centre of the top disc of wood. A piece of cord (or chain) is attached to the end of a piece of wood about two feet long, whose other end is fastened to the house. Thus I have two wooden plates hanging one above the other at the end of a horizontal arm or pole.

"Both plates are piled with food, and if the cat should jump up the loose chains tip up the wooden plates and she slips off at once. It is so simple and safe. I have five of them round the house; the birds are so hungry and look so sweet."

"Never think of my seeds, do you? Encouraging the blessed birds!"

"Well, dear, they would come in any case, but they would eat more seeds if I didn't feed them, because they would be hungry!"

She poured out some more tea with the air of having scored a point, and Beauty heaved a deep sigh under the table.

"Of course, they must have water, too—fresh water in pans or saucers, and a larger pan to have a bath in."

"Non-paying guest house, that's what it is," grumbled the Colonel, surreptitiously stirring the dog with his foot while he held out a lump of sugar.

"But you know it's worth it, dear—it's so sweet to see all the families being fed, and the little feathered things splashing about in the bird bath."

"And the blasted cuckoo at five in the morning!"

There was a moment's silence.

"And do you know the latest?" He turned suddenly to me, shaking his finger and glaring at me. "Do you know the latest: the birds can't even build their own nests now; a factory has been opened in Jutland for the manufacture of storks' nests, which apparently are finding a ready market!"

Chapter Sixteen

I MAKE A ROCKERY

I HAD looked forward to having a rockery ever since I started taking one or two gardening papers. When my back is aching with hand-weeding, I thought, I can go and weed something which will not require much stooping and enjoy my little fairy flowers as well. I therefore proceeded to hunt out some pictures of rockeries from some of the periodicals. When after three hours' search the photograph was eventually run to earth, it showed a horseshoe-shaped rockery with a smaller mound in front, and one or two outcrops of stone in the grass; just right for a medium-sized garden. I showed the photograph to Bill and in due course the medium-sized rockery stone arrived.

I may say here that the price of stone depends, of course, on how far away the nearest quarry may be, but the three main sources of rockery stone are Westmorland, Cheddar and Swanage. Westmorland is full of little wrinkles and is most decorative, particularly for the tiny rockery. Swanage is rather white if only quarried and not surface stone is obtainable, but it turns a mellow grey after a while. Cheddar is something between the two so far as appearance goes. Sandstone may be used, but is inclined to break, as it is rather soft; but better be without a rockery than have one made of round flints, cement blocks or bricks.

The place chosen was in full sun and well away from the house, and the portion between the "horseshoe" and the "mound" (once rudely called by a friend the "baby's grave") was dug out to provide steps down a path of crazy paving and steps up the other side. The whole rockery now occupies about twenty-five feet by eighteen at the further end of the lawn; not very large, but enough to enable me to grow a few of the plants I am particularly fond of and provide a little feature to the garden.

During the making of it I felt rather like the clown at the circus

running about after Bill and Herbert, who were heaving stone and barrowing soil while I was doing nothing but bombard Bill with questions which he did his best to answer as he worked.

"Rock plants don't mind extremes of temperature so long as the tops are kept fairly dry and their long, deep roots have a free run of moist, well-drained soil," he said; "and you will see when we place the stones that they will be tilted slightly up in the front and down at the back to let the rain-water run away from the collar of the plant (where they most easily damp off) and to soak down to the roots."

Herbert had done a certain amount of soil sifting in the kitchen garden for the seed bed, and the result was a substantial heap of stones collected in one corner. These were barrowed over and formed a porous drainage base for the two rockeries and prevented the soil subsequently from sinking. Over this was spread the contents of the rubbish heap and a big quantity of leaves, and then soil and manure mixed together. This brought the soil formation nearly up to the desired height. The stones were then roughly sorted out and the largest placed at the bottom on the actual ground level, and of course below ground level where the steps and little path descended. This decided the shape of the rockery. The stones were slightly tilted back and were almost touching to prevent the soil washing down, but were nevertheless set as irregularly as possible.

A quarter and sometimes even half of a stone was buried in the soil and well rammed till it was firm enough to stand or walk on without rocking. The next stage was to fix further stones up the sides of the horseshoe (sometimes a single one, sometimes a group of three). The weathered side of the stone was placed outwards, as far as possible, and the lines of stratification were horizontal.

"There is nothing worse than to see a rockery with the stones standing on end like the almonds in a plum pudding," said Bill; then continuing, "I should leave the planting until the spring; it will give the rockery more time to settle down. It is bound to sink a little, and it can then be tidied over finally before the plants go in. It is a good thing you can plant a few white flowers; it will make it so much more effective."

"What *do* you mean?" I asked, puzzled. "I knew a lady who lived in a manufacturing town who said she never dreamt of

planting white flowers because there was so much soot and grey flowers were so depressing!"

By now the construction was complete and I surveyed it with satisfaction. The small rockery may consist only of outcrops in the grass; this is very effective, but does not permit much room for planting and rather complicates the mowing. I wanted planting space above everything, and nothing in the garden which made for extra work, so with the exception of two little outcrops to connect the rockery with the grass and the rest of the garden, my rockery, in its new unplanted state, rose rather unexpectedly straight from the grass.

Now I felt I must have a lily pool somewhere in the garden (the gardening fever had entered into me properly), and so I consulted the valuable Bill on the subject. "It wouldn't cost a great deal, Mum—roughly about a pound if it is about four feet square and two pounds if it is about four feet by eight feet. Not counting labour, of course."

I said I would like an elliptical pool in the middle of the rose beds instead of a sundial.

At Bill's request I got my spade and marked it out roughly and went up to the landing window now and then to see if it was straight, and, when I was satisfied, Bill started excavating.

Herbert was commissioned once more with the barrow, this time to depart full and return empty (filling in the hole from which we had borrowed soil for other parts of the garden, and for levelling-up paths. As Bill dug, he relapsed once more into reminiscence.

"There does seem to be a craze for flats now, Mum. Even houses never intended to hold more than one family (I mean the good old-fashioned spacious houses, of course) are split up in the most remarkable ways to hold three or four separate families, with separate entrances and exits. I remember one very nice house I was asked to work at one day a week which was built on a steep hillside. The border had been made along the outer edge of the garden, and every now and then when I arrived to work after a severe frost or a period of rain I would find that half the border had vanished down the hill, plants and all. Many times I suggested banking up the back of the border with turves and wooden piles, but no—'It would be much too expensive!' Nevertheless, every year the lady bought the newest delphiniums

and pæonies (she was especially fond of them) to replace the missing plants. And, as you know, Mum, they *can* be expensive.

"The next winter most of those had disappeared also! Frequently she would return from shopping with one small cutting or plant she had bought and I had to follow her all round the garden for half an hour holding on to this one plant until she had decided where it should finally come to rest. I felt so silly if the people in the flats were watching me! This lady also had an idea that to sharpen the mower would be to shorten its life, and I assure you, Mum, I did not feel very charitable towards her, having to push a heavy mower which stuck and jammed every five minutes with grass it would not cut."

"I have already done some of that," I said, "but that was because my little lawn consisted of mountain tops and valleys and my mower valiantly tried to cut the mountain tops as well as the grass."

"You have never had to run for your life when you have been gardening, though, have you now?" And he leant on his spade for a moment with a raised eyebrow. "Well, no, I can't say I have," I replied thoughtfully.

"You see, the converted house could only have its garage at the further end and the drive had to run all round the house to get to it. The owner was one of those wild animals—in a bright red sports car—which seem to appear like the flying ants in August. The drive was very narrow, and he used to shoot round the corner and see how many rose poles he could steer in and out of without knocking any down. I think also he liked to see me run, and I did run, too. Must have been very dull for him six days in the week."

At this point Beauty, who had come up to inspect the work progressing, decided that we were on the beach sand digging (a performance that gave him so much pleasure that, apart from his own legitimate hole which he dug out for himself on the beach, he commenced a habit of digging under one back leg of occupied deck-chairs, with unfortunate results; till I firmly remonstrated). Thinking apparently that the holiday season had miraculously occurred earlier than usual, he leapt in and flung out soil right and left all over the paths and the rose beds.

"I think it must have been the young man's father," Bill continued later, "who used to sunbathe on warm days in very

little more than a pair of sun glasses. When I had been toiling in the heat with the wretched mower, or bent double weeding the border, he would observe from the depths of his comfortable armchair, 'I always think gardening is such a healthy life, don't you?' I must say, however, the lady I worked for was very considerate and insisted that I had tea there from the first day I went.

"Owing to the adaptation of her flat there was no back door, so the maid used to bring out a tray for me. This and the tea service surprisingly consisted of solid silver, and with its two thin slices of bread and butter and one finger of cake, was placed flat on the lawn. I always felt anxious (having got over my first surprise) as to whether the sports car would appear before I had finished, and the tray was safely back in the flat."

By this time the cavity for my pool was opened to its full dimensions. I must say it looked at least three times as large as when I had marked it out. "I don't want a swimming pool," I said. "It won't be nearly so large when it is finished. The bottom and sides will be filled in with concrete seven or eight inches thick, and you will be surprised how much smaller it will look."

The next day he mixed up concrete and later on cement in complicated quantities and gradually something that looked like an enormous dull grey bowl appeared among the roses.

"Could you sink me a large shallow cement bird bath somewhere over by the shrubs in the grass?" I asked. "I know in the summer the bird bath is not going to be nearly large enough; I keep filling it and washing it out even now."

So the cement that was left over was used to cement a very shallow pool about four feet in diameter and a stiff broom is used to clear out the water and the dirt both at the same time. There is quite a queue waiting in the shrubs on a warm summer day for "the pleasures of the pool."

Chapter Seventeen

GETTING MY ROCKERY FURNISHED

THE time had come for me to order my rock plants, and I tackled the catalogues accordingly. All my friends had been sending me catalogues of one sort or another ever since I had moved into the country, so I had plenty to choose from. I soon found, however, that catalogues are compiled for the expert gardener and not for the ignoramus who wants to stock his garden successfully. One wants a sort of guide to catalogues to sort out the different kinds from the alphabetical order. For instance, we have Kniphofia, then Lavendula, then Leontopodium and then Lilies. Could any plants be more different that those four? Yet they come together because they are arranged alphabetically.

If an index were arranged alphabetically describing the items as Rock Plants, Herbaceous Plants, Bulbs, etc., and those subdivided according to heights, colours, times of flowering, spring bulbs and summer bulbs with heights and colours, it seems to me it would take little longer to compile but would be a thousand times easier for the ignorant to follow. For instance, a pink, medium-sized perennial flowering in July, or a blue rock plant flowering in September will take a long time to find. It is all very well for the gardener who knows what he wants before he looks it up, but a great many of us don't know until it is suggested. To plough through the average catalogue for a yellow rock plant, particularly when the herbaceous plants and the rock plants all go in together, alphabetically, is a long job, and even then you may not find out when it flowers till you have bought it.

Secondly, it seems to me that the smaller the plant the longer the name, and, after wrestling with Alyssum saxatile compactum flore pleno, or Helianthemum vulgare carminatum plenum and Retinospora pisifera plumose nana compressa, I felt that to be a student of medicine or study economics would be comparatively simple. However, it is not as alarming as it looks if one has a

nodding acquaintance with Latin, and the long strings of names are the result, roughly, of much cross-breeding.

Again (put very loosely), the first name is family, the second description, the third variety; thus we have Rudbeckia (the kind of plant) laciniata (leaves cut into narrow lobes) plena ("double" or "full") "Golden Glow" (variety). Rudbeckia laciniata plena "Golden Glow" thus explains itself and will be easy to remember. Or, again, Prunus (Stone fruit family) Cerasus (Cherry) Avium (bird) flore (flower) pleno (double) Hisakura (Japanese word signifying the variety), Prunus Cerasus Avium flore pleno Hisakura. When a variety becomes popular, however, somebody pronounces a strike and shortens it to Cerasus Hisakura. A few words like nanus (dwarf), procumbens or prostrata (lying on the ground), cordifolius (heart-shaped leaves), poly (many), anthus (flower), rubens or rubrus (red), recurvus (bent back), etc., will help enormously in memorising these alarming-looking names, as they are really descriptions of the plant.

However, the rock plants I have now growing on the rockery are neither rare nor expensive, but grown either for the amount of flower they give or for their distinctive colour or just because I like them. They are, however, all fairly easy to grow, and I recommend them herewith. Let me confess, I have added a few more names than I actually possess plants of. That is because my rockery will not hold all, but I have the names written out in readiness for the extension of the rock garden, which will have to be carried out before I can be well content.

Rock Plants

Alyssum saxatile flore pleno. Androsace lanuginosa, A. sarmentosa. Anemone Hepatica, A. Pulsatilla. Antennaria dioica tomentosa. Aquilegia alpina. Arenaria balearica. Armeria maritima. Aster Bellidiastrum. Aubrietia Dr. Mules, A. J. S. Baker. Bellis perennis Dresden China. Campanula carpatica, C. portenschlagiana (muralis), C. Miss Willmott. Cheiranthus Harpur Crewe. Convolvulus Cneorum. Dianthus deltoides. Epilobium Dodonæi. Erigeron mueronatus. Erinus alpinus. Erodium macradenum. Euphorbia pilulifera. Gentiana acaulis, G. sino-ornata. Geum Borisii. Gypsophila repens monstrosa. Helianthemum vulgare Fireball, H. v. Jubilee, H. v. Mrs. Earle.

Hypericum reptans. Iberis sempervirens Little Gem. Iris pumila Carl, I. p. Golden Dwarf. Linaria æquitriloba. Linum alpinum. Lithospermum prostratum. Lychnis Flos-Jovis. Mentha Requienii. Mesembryanthemum crassifolium. Œnothera missouriensis. Phlox atropurpurea, P. G. F. Wilson. Phyteuma comosum. Pinus sylvestris globosa. Potentilla fragiformis, P. nitida. Raoulia australis. Rosa Roulettii. Rubus arcticus. Silene acaulis. Stokesia cyanea. Thymus serpyllum, T. citridorus Silver Queen, T. vulgaris aurea variegata. Veronica incana, V. pectinata. Viola cornuta, V. gracilis, V. g. Moonlight, V. teuchrium dubia.

Rock Shrubs

Cistus Silver Pink. Cotoneaster adpressa. Cupressus obtusa nana (Retinospora), C. pisifera nana. Cytisus Kewensis. Daphne Cneorum. Erica carnea, E. mediterranea. Genista hispanica, G. tinctoria flore pleno. Juniperus communis compressa (hibernica compressa). Salix Bockii. Veronica Hectori.

I left it to the nurseryman to send me a good selection of the mossy and encrusted saxifrages and also the fat, prosperous-looking houseleeks (sempervivum).

Thinking then of my crazy path, I decided to have plenty of the different varieties of Thymes, the flatter types like serphyllum near the centre, and the upright kinds nearer to the outside. As well as these I chose Arenaria balearica, Linaria globosa, Mentha Requienii, Campanula pusilla, mossy saxifrages, Sedum farinosum, Sempervivum arachnoideum, Phlox Douglasii and Viola biflora. The centre of the path, I have found from experience (as I lack common sense), is best left unplanted if the path is continually in use.

The taller plants should be nearer the edges, where there is less danger of their being kicked or trodden on.

Nothing looks more charming than a border edging frothing out irregularly as foam on to the paving, and in this case the paving plants must not be planted too near the border, as they do not appreciate being "foamed on to," as it were.

Garage entrances need not be a desert of gravel or asphalt or even cemented flags of paving, but two strips of paving to take the wheels of the car (they are better cemented as they are comparatively narrow) and the rest grass is very effective and in

"Most of the gamblin' I start

keeping with the rest of the garden where the paths are paving or grass.

As a rule the dividing fences or trellises have a narrow border which may be planted up with rambler roses trained diagonally, and all streaming in the same direction. The leaves and flowers are distributed more evenly when the sap is checked a little by diagonal training, and thus forms a thicker screen.

When I first suggested this for my garden I had the usual opposition from Herbert, who is always averse to trying anything new.

However, I met with support for the borders and the trellis, at any rate, from an unexpected quarter. Mrs. Ransom voiced an opinion.

"Don't be silly, 'Erbert. If you 'ad to spend all day in a kitchen looking at pots and pans you'd be mighty thankful to 'ave somethin' nice to look at outa window. You move about among flowers all day and don't know when you're well off. Plant up they ramblers and don't let's 'ear any more nonsense."

I always feel that the edgings are a very important part of the garden. The edging gives a tidy finish to the informal garden, like the ribbon round the head of a child with fluffy, curly hair; on the other hand, it accentuates the neatness of the formal garden. I have now quite a long edging of violas. I am often asked if I don't find it a great nuisance to be always raising plants from cuttings as old plants die away, but I don't find it necessary to take cuttings very often, because my plants last for many years.

I find that Violas, Pinks, Pansies, Aubrietia and Thrift are apt to go bare in the middle, while the long straggling shoots radiating from the centre become longer and longer and more and more untidy. Every summer, therefore, when this is beginning to happen, I place a small spadeful of good soil in the centre of each plant, press it firmly and clip off all the outside straggly growths. The whole line of edging is watered through a rose can to prevent the soil from getting dry and soon a little forest of young shoots break through the centre, neat and thick for a winter edging and ready to flower the following summer. Eventually the clumps will rise higher and higher out of the ground, of course, and about every third year the whole line is lifted and replanted deeper.

Apart from the speed and easiness of renewing the edge this

way, the plants are continually forming valuable young surface roots, so that by the time they are lifted the bottom roots can usually be dispensed with.

To edge a border which is expected to cover a long-flowering period a mixed line of catmint, Old Clove Pink and Alyssum provide flower at three periods during the summer, while a row of striped or coloured crocuses in front provide colour in the very early spring. The crocuses have died right down by the time the grass edge is due for cutting and the edging plants expand themselves. Catmint and Alyssum should, of course, be cut right back after flowering.

Before I quit this question of selecting plants for various purposes and positions let me relate a further bit of information I got from Bill when, in one of his reminiscent moods, he told me about one of his clients in his jobbing gardening days.

"There were two very useful things I learnt in that garden," said Bill. "The first was what flowers to plant in a border in permanent shade, the second was what flowers to plant in a bone-dry border in sun." "I should like very much to know both," I said.

He paused in his digging and rested on his spade.

"I learnt them off by heart," he went on; "I got so tired of people saying to me, 'I have got such a shady border here, you know, nothing will grow. Well, now, what do you suggest?' that I just learnt them off and sort of repeat them like a parrot: 'Œnotheras, Campanula carpatica, Nicotiana, Calceolarias, Campanula persicifolia, Anchusa myosotidiflora, Aconite, Montbretias, Solomon's Seal, Aquilegia and Tiger Lily.'"

He paused to take breath.

"And the plants which will grow in a hot, dry border in full sun," I enquired; "did you learn all those off in the same way?"

"Well, I started with two, and then, when I saw others doing well, I learnt those, too, till I had just a few I could trot out on occasions." He took a deep breath.

"Delphinium nudicaule, Sea Holly, Sun Roses, Zauchneria californica (took some time, that one did), Flax, Malva Moschata, Lychnis, Erodium manescavi, Santolina, Iris Stylosa, Wallflowers, Eschscholtzias (the hot plants have worse names than the cold ones, I think), Stocks, Sedum spectabile and Othonnopsis cheirifolia."

Chapter Eighteen

I JOIN THE WORLD'S WORKERS

ONE morning early in spring I walked into the kitchen and accosted Mrs. Ransom. "I want breakfast at half-past eight to-morrow and some lunch made up into a parcel; I am going off to work."

"You're *what*, Ma'am?" "For six hours every day for a few weeks (with half an hour to enjoy your nice sandwiches, of course) I am really going to work hard. The nurseries have asked for my valuable services and they shall have them."

So at half-past nine the next day I rolled up in the car like any true British worker, booted and spurred to commence my duties. I was taken by the foreman (afterwards known as Joe) into a large airy shed with a long bench at which two girls were working. I was introduced to Mary and Molly (Molly afterwards broke into a spirited whistling of "Come into the garden, Maud") and left to my fate. By the bench was a large square tray with handles at each end and standing on four sturdy legs. On this were rows of small pots each with four little plants pressed against the outer edge. On the floor was a whole row of large pots of chrysanthemums, now over.

"You have come to help Mary with the cuttings, haven't you?" said Molly. "I don't know," I replied, "but I certainly will," and I fished about in various pockets for my brand new knife. Mary left the pot she was working on to take it from me (having eventually run it to earth) and test its sharpness with her thumb. Silently she moistened a flat stone with a little water and rubbed the blade on its surface with a gentle circular movement. "Never use a new knife for anything particular till it has been ground or sharpened," she said, handing it back to me, "and soft wood cuttings are very important." I tested the blade as I had seen her do and promptly cut my thumb.

Molly, who seemed to be dividing Maidenhair ferns, had already changed her tune to "Parted," now with praiseworthy swiftness changed it again to "Oh, my goodness," while Mary drew a long, wide strand of raffia from a bunch that looked like a horse's tail hanging on the wall, moistened it in the watering-can and swiftly bound up my thumb. "It's not as bad as all that," I said. "Never mind, raffia makes an excellent bandage, and if you were to get soil into the cut you might get lockjaw and die." I said no more.

She then showed me how to select a strong, short-jointed chrysanthemum shoot rising from the little forest in each pot at the base of the old flowering stem. This she severed neatly below the soil. She cut away each leaf at the base with an upward movement, leaving a little rosette at the top, and then cut straight across the stem at the bottom just below a leaf joint or node. The cutting was about three inches long.

Taking a three-inch pot filled with soil she made a hole against the side with the blunt end of a pencil, dropped the cutting in and pressed the soil gently against it with her fingers. "Be quite sure the base of the cutting rests on the bottom of the hole," she said, "and there is no air space between." Five of these cuttings went into a pot, and the pot was added to a line in the handbarrow, the end one having a label.

I slowly followed her example by practising on a few shoots which she explained were unsuitable, being too long or too thin for cuttings. She then showed me how to break up a broken flower pot to get one fairly large crock, which was put over the hole in the pot like a bridge while smaller ones were dropped in over it. Then some rough lumps of old turf were put in, then some soil from the heap on the bench. This was made firm in the pot by using the top end of a dibber upside down (but not too firm). After this I took some cuttings and inserted four in a pot, and began to feel I was really beginning to pull my weight.

Molly meanwhile had finished her potting and had departed whistling "Good-bye, sweetheart" till the strains faded away in the distance. "I hope I haven't driven her away," I said. "Not at all; she is delighted that you have come. Her work is really the herbaceous stock, and she still has some more to divide and plant up, but she was called off to get on with the indoor propagating much against her will."

As we worked she roughly outlined to me the spring propagating work in a nursery. The seeds which are sown in boxes of the half-hardy and then the hardy annuals and bedding plants, which later have to be pricked out again into boxes and thus are sold; of the cuttings to be taken for plants ready to flower in the summer and autumn, and of cuttings taken in August and rooted, now to be potted-up in separate pots, like Hydrangeas, Heliotrope, Pentstemons, and others.

Mary was quiet and rather shy, and her clear explanations were the result of a good deal of coaxing on my part. Later on she explained her reticence. "The extra help we get here in the spring are either people who want a little extra pin-money and work with one eye on the clock or else people who come knowing everything and set out to teach Molly and I, and sometimes the men, how things should be done."

"You are here always, then?" I asked. "Oh yes; Molly's herbaceous things keep her going, and I help with the tying and staking in the houses and picking flowers for market in the summer and propagating alpines the rest of the year. You can usually tell what job Molly is on by the tune she is whistling; she does it partly to amuse us, of course, but she is always rather a cheerful soul."

She had scarcely finished speaking when we heard a familiar tune, usually associated with Christmas, in the distance, "While shepherds watched their flocks by night."

"There you are, there is a case in point," said Mary, picking up another pot. "She is planting up the phlox now, but this is not quite as good as some of her efforts. One day last summer I guessed she must be staking and tying the delphiniums because we had 'If I hadn't been green when I met you I wouldn't be blue to-day.' Yesterday I followed the planting of one row of her stock by the tunes from first to last. 'Nice work if you can get it' meant she was digging out her trench; as she planted we had, 'Someone to care for me'; as she finished the row we had, 'I've got you on a line'; and lastly, 'The greatest mistake of my life,' when she found she had put in the wrong label. She's really very ingenious," she finished.

"She must have an immense repertoire," I said, "and the idea is certainly original."

By this time the handbarrow was full, and with Mary at one

end and myself at the other between the shafts, as it were, we carried them to brick frames with pipes running along the side and sieved ashes on the floor, on which we stacked the pots close together.

Mary watered them through a rose-can with water from a tank inside the greenhouse and closed the light.

"Some cuttings strike more quickly if they have bottom heat (heat under the pots)," she said. "In a nursery there are usually some pits and frames heated with pipes or else a hot-bed is used. Always remember that plants under glass should be watered with water of the same temperature as the house, otherwise they become chilled. The tanks in the houses are always filled immediately after the watering is done."

"What other cuttings will you be taking during these two months?" I asked, as we walked back to the empty barrow.

"The last of the carnations (perpetual flowering) and cuttings from old stools of heliotrope, marguerite, Salvia patens, dahlias and geraniums."

We arrived at the potting-shed and started on a fresh batch. "The dahlia cuttings are very much the same as these, but the others are taken from the main stem of the plant; the process, however, varies but little. The plants are put in frames for the winter to keep them from the frost, and in the spring they are brought into the houses and watered and syringed to induce them to break into nice young shoots for cuttings."

At this point we heard, "No rose in all the world."

"My goodness!" said Mary. "I shut the watering-can in the frames and she is looking for it." I soon got used to this form of message-carrying, but occasionally we were both at a loss, like when we heard, "There's something in the air."

"I can't quite guess that," said Mary thoughtfully. Afterwards we heard that at that moment she was being chased all over the nursery by an angry bee she had unwittingly disturbed, and wanted Mary to come to the rescue.

We finished the chrysanthemum cuttings and returned with a load of hydrangea cuttings round the edges of their pots like we had inserted the chrysanthemum cuttings. On the way back I noticed two wheelbarrows upside down in a huge stone water tank. "Have they fallen in?" I asked innocently.

"Oh dear no," said Mary. "In the dry weather or if they

have been in the shed too long the wood is apt to crack and shrink, so periodically they are left in the tank for the night. We also soak all our new pots in the tank. If you pot up a plant in a brand new pot it soaks up all the moisture from the soil at once, which you can imagine is extremely bad for the plant."

Having arrived at the potting-shed she showed me how to tap the hydrangea pots gently so that the soil and the cuttings loosened together. The rooted cuttings were shaken from the soil, held in position in the nearly empty fresh pot and the soil scooped up by hand and added till the root was covered. The dibber was then used to make the soil thoroughly firm by gentle hammering. The finished article had a good inch between the top of the soil and the top of the pot, "To allow for watering and top dressing later on," explained Mary. "These will be in flower in June or July, one large blossom to each six-inch pot, and those that are not sold are potted-on again into larger pots ready for planting out next year or sold as handsome pot or tub plants."

"Why are some blue and some pink?" I asked. "Are they different varieties?" "Oh no," she replied, "the type is usually pink, but most people prefer the blue ones, so the pot plants are watered with a chemical solution to turn them blue. We use 'Cyanol' here; some people use powdered alum, but in some places where there is a good proportion of iron in the soil hydrangeas turn blue without any artificial means. I believe the cliffs in some parts of the Isle of Wight are a wonderful sight in season with great bushes of blue hydrangeas massed up the sides and along the top for some miles."

For the last two or three minutes our work had been accompanied by spasmodic hammering. "What on earth is that?" I shouted above the noise. "That's Frederick the Great making seed boxes," she yelled. We gave up conversation. After a quarter of an hour silence reigned. "It's all right," she said, "you can talk for ten minutes now Frederick is in his thriller." "What *do* you mean?" I said, bewildered. "Well, you see, Fred is the boy who washes the pots, makes the seed boxes and generally fetches and carries. He's terribly keen on detective stories at the moment, and so when he's put on box making he hammers feverishly for a quarter of an hour and then reads about the strong man with the bulldog jaw who solved the mystery which had baffled Scotland Yard for months. He imagines him-

self, of course, in the rôle. He was christened 'The Great' in consequence. When Joe lost his secateurs we found him going over the handles of the tools with french chalk and a magnifying glass looking for finger-prints. I had found them myself meanwhile, and we had to inform Frederick, who was evidently chagrined at such frustration of his practical sleuthwork."

A few minutes later hammering started again with renewed energy, and when it became intolerable I left the shed to find Molly, who was grappling with some tough "stools," the nursery term for big clumps of roots. "What are these, and why are you tearing them to bits?" I asked. "Aster Amellus, otherwise Michaelmas daisies," replied Molly, "and I am not tearing them to bits for fun; just get hold of one of these forks and help me; you'll see whether it is fun." She handed me a small broad-pronged fork with a short handle, showed me where to thrust it, close behind hers, into the very heart of the plant. I did as she told me. "Now press the handle outward," she said, and as I did so Molly pressed hers in the opposite direction. There was a noise of tearing and splitting, and the clump became two halves. Molly took one half in her hands, shaking and thumping it so that soil tumbled from the roots, and then, her fingers deftly grasped piece by piece, pulling away, one at a time, single crowns of young growth with a few roots attached to each. These were placed along a shallow trench opened across the bed of soil in a frame, nice sandy soil was used to cover the roots, and after a good deal of pressing and levelling, another trench was made and similarly filled. When all the pieces were planted they had a good watering from a rosed can and the glazed light was pulled over, closing the frame. "These will be a nice batch of strong plants for putting out next autumn," said Molly.

Chapter Nineteen

POINTS ABOUT POTTING PLANTS

THE difference between potting-"up" and potting-"on" was soon explained to me. A rooted cutting or something dug straight out of the garden is potted-"up" because the roots are disturbed and the soil is shaken out. Moving a plant from a small pot to a larger one is usually done without disturbing the roots, and this is called potting-"on." I was shown how to loosen the ball of root in the pot by placing a finger on each side of the plant, holding the pot upside down and gently knocking the rim against the table (up and down, not sideways). The larger pots required a good bump before the ball of root freed itself from the side of the pot. The crocks and turf were put at the bottom of each pot, the plant knocked out and (with its own crocks removed) placed in the centre of the pot so that the top of the old ball of soil came an inch and a half below the rim of the pot. Soil was added by hand and rammed at intervals until the required height was reached and the plant covered.

Plants newly potted-on are never watered for a day or so after potting, to permit the fresh soil to become as dry or as moist as the old soil. Strangely enough, if this is not done at the beginning the two soils never mix, and when the plant is again potted-on the second soil falls away from the first, breaking the roots of the plant. Geraniums are kept on the dry side in any case, of course; even the cuttings are put in sand and practically not watered at all.

After the greater part of a day spent in Mary's company potting-on various batches of plants, including pelargoniums, fuchsias, marguerites, Salvia splendens and some pentstemons, I went home flattering myself that I had learned all about potting and would, henceforth, have no difficulty in deciding why a languid and sickly plant belonging to some friend of mine who

sought my advice was not flourishing as it should do. It was not long, however, before I found that I had only learned the most elementary part of what is really an intricate and complex subject, for when next I was able to spend a day in the potting-shed we were dealing with totally different classes of plants, which included a few palms and dracænas, some greenhouse heaths, azaleas and several sorts of greenhouse ferns, varying in size from plants requiring tiny pots to big specimens which were being shifted from seven-inch to ten-inch pots. For all these plants I discovered that brown, fibrous peat played a much greater part than either loam or leaf-mould, which had been the principal ingredients used in the compost for those plants handled on the former occasion. For the bigger sizes a certain amount of loam was used, but it was of very fibrous character, and most of the earthy particles were shaken out and put aside for use in other directions.

Preparation of the soil took considerable time because both the peat and the loam had to be pulled apart by hand, and it depended upon the size of the pots to be used how small the rough pieces were allowed to be. For big pots both the peat and the loam were left in rough chunks, nearly three inches in diameter, and even for the five-inch pots there was little used that would be less than one inch whichever way measured.

Considerably less sand was used than we had done when using the loam and leaf-mould mixture, and when I asked the reason why, it was explained that the sole purpose of the sand was to ensure porosity of a compost that would, without it, become too closely compressed, but with so fibrous a material as we now were using this compression is unlikely to occur. Consequently sand plays a smaller part in fibrous peat mixtures than in those of more substantial and adhesive soils.

The compost that was prepared for the ferns had a considerable addition of leaf-mould, but that for the hard-wooded plants such as heaths and azaleas had very little of the leaf soil. In each case a good sprinkling of charcoal in the form of nuggets about the size of peas was added and thoroughly mixed by turning the heap over two or three times. It was explained to me that charcoal has the power of absorbing much that would otherwise tend to make the soil in the pots sour or unhealthy.

Crocking for these kinds of plants proved to be quite an im-

portant business, demanding care. All crocks had to be, in the first place, scrupulously clean, and they were not just tipped into the bottom of the pots, but were placed carefully with convex sides upwards, it being explained that this facilitates unhampered passage of drainage water, whereas if the concave side was placed uppermost a certain amount of that drainage would be held as in a saucer, causing soil to become sour.

Another difference between the potting of hard-wooded plants and those of softer growth is that the rough lumps of peat and loam are rammed much tighter than in the case of the loam and leaf-mould compost for soft-wooded, rapid growing plants, but when potting the ferns, even though using the peat compost, pressure was by no means so severe.

I was told that some of the plants potted on this day had not been dealt with for three years and would probably remain undisturbed in their fresh pots for another three or even four years. Hence, it can be understood that when the operation is performed it is advisable and important to take care that it is properly done.

Another detail that was explained while we worked was that with those plants which are very slow in making new roots it is all the more important to take great care that the soil never becomes saturated with water before it is occupied with new roots. At the same time, it must not be allowed to become bone dry, because peat is extremely difficult to soak after once it has been badly dried out; but whilst the roots of the plants must not be too freely watered, their tops must be kept fresh and supple by daily overhead syringing with soft water that is at least as warm as the atmosphere of the house in which they grow. In the early months of the year this overhead spraying is done in the morning only, so that there may be no condensation of cold moisture at night, but in the hot months of summer, evening is the better time for syringing, because the moisture dries away at a slower pace and keeps the plants comfortably cool throughout the night hours, which, broadly speaking, is the resting period for plants as well as for ourselves. For some things which must have a constantly humid atmosphere, syringing, on a hot, dry day, is a job for morning, noon and evening. Of course, the roof blinds are drawn down when the sun glares through the glass, or sprayed young foliage would be scalded and seriously injured.

A break in the potting operations on this day occurred when

Mary had to water one of the carnation houses and said I had better come with her.

Having filled her can from the tank in the floor, she said:

"First of all, of course, we never use flower-pot saucers, as we like plenty of air to circulate beneath the pots; that is one reason for the open staging, and also stagnant water is very bad for most plants. It is impossible to tell by looking at the soil whether a plant is dry or not, and the quickest and safest way of finding out is to knock the side of each pot sharply with knuckle or finger-nail, and after a little practice you will find that a dry pot gives a hollow ring, whereas if the plants are moist it has a dead sound, more like knocking a large stone.

"Of course, plants which are potted rather low may sound dry (if you know what I mean), but you must allow for that; on the other hand, plants which like to be kept dry will ring a trifle in any case."

"Rather hard on the knuckles to tap a couple of hundred pots, isn't it?" I asked.

"For the bigger sizes of pots we have a little wooden mallet," she said, showing it to me before she commenced.

She took the rose off the can and tapped her way rapidly down the house like a giant woodpecker.

"Why don't you just water the lot once every day or twice a week?" I asked, following her down.

"Because you are dealing with living things in a changeable atmosphere, so you cannot give the same amount of water to each one every day. When a plant sounds dry it is filled up to the brim with water so that we may be sure of the water reaching the bottom roots, otherwise it is not watered at all. We never give little driblets," she concluded.

"Don't stop talking," I urged; "I want to learn some more of your wisdom." So Mary resumed. "Never allow moss to grow on the surface soil, as it keeps the air out. Every now and then we feed the pot plants by spreading a thin layer of artificial fertiliser like Clay's or Multiple over the top of the soil.

"Greenhouse plants are often syringed to induce them to break into bud, sometimes to clean the house from aphis, sometimes because they are the type of plant that likes a wet atmosphere, like cucumbers. In any case the sun on glass has such an artificial drying effect that most greenhouses are damped down once

or twice a day to bring the atmospheric moisture up to normal. On the other hand, excessive dampness encourages mildew, and when plants get that, if they only have it slightly, it can be cured with flowers of sulphur dusted on." Noticing that Mary's shoes and stockings were now saturated, I said: "Better dust flowers of sulphur on them now."

"The sun's coming out; I must damp down after all," said Mary.

Next time we were in the potting-shed we had to pot up tiny tomato plants from boxes into three-inch pots. This was done in the same way as the rooted hydrangea cuttings, but the plants being so fragile all the firming was done with the fingers only.

For this fresh compost was mixed. Two men barrowed soil on to the floor of the shed; they added a little well-rotted manure, a five-inch pot of bonemeal and a five-inch pot of wood-ashes to each barrowload. Starting at one side of the heap, they turned the soil away and worked through the heap till the other side was reached. They then commenced to turn the heap back again. This was done four times, till the whole was thoroughly mixed and ready for use. I made a note of doing the same thing in much smaller quantities when I repotted the contents of my future greenhouse.

While Joe and another man were engaged in this he heard his name called, and we saw Molly walking up the path carrying her spade horizontally. "Oh dear, I know what this means; why you ladies can't kill your own grubs I can't think." And he went out to meet her, while she deposited a heap of fat white grubs at his feet and went off whistling "You're a sweetheart."

"Molly always brings all the cockchafer grubs she finds in the piece of ground she is digging to Joe to deal with; and I must say I don't blame her," commented Mary. "It isn't just because we are girls; they *are* revolting, aren't they?" I heartily agreed.

"It is only Molly's love for her flowers that has induced her to inaugurate slug-hunting parties in the summer," she went on. "We all have supper here at about eleven o'clock at night, and then, each armed with a lantern and a bucket of very strong salt and water, we have to go slug hunting. The first part is all right, of course!

"Sometimes we get ladies to help here who are very 'precious,'" she went on. "Last year we had a French lady who never

stopped asking questions in a high-pitched voice that carried all over the nursery. She arrived on a warm day in April in a white silk frock with a tiny frilled blue apron in front and a very smart white straw hat well on one side and very light high-heeled shoes.

"It was my pleasant duty to ask her to hoe between the rows of lettuces, whereupon she remarked, 'Ah, but 'ow pairfect, 'ow I *love* ze Nature.' When I returned about two hours later she was soaked from head to foot and smeared with wet sticky earth; the white frock was hardly recognisable. 'Ah, I thought you said "hose" ze lettuce; 'ow stupide, I regret some leetle ones are right away from Mozer Earth, no?' I led her firmly away from the scene of lettuce seedlings watered with an open nozzle in full sun. They never recovered. She also watered two rows of new carnations with weed killer by mistake before someone found the tin open by chance!"

Soon after this we started on the seed sowing. The boxes were laid upon the bench and five crocks were placed on the bottom, over this a thin layer of leaf-mould, and, lastly, finely sifted soil made firm with the fingers. The seeds were sown as thinly and evenly as possible, and a final sprinkling of soil just covered them. The box was then set on the handbarrow, labelled, and ready to be removed to one of the houses.

In a small garden it is advisable to place a sheet of glass, and over this a piece of brown paper (to keep out the light), over the box until the seedlings appear evenly all over. The glass, however, should be wiped from time to time, to dispose of surplus moisture which causes mildew.

I thought, while I worked, that it was time I went back to my own garden, which I knew was needing much attention, and decided to leave the nurseries the following week.

Chapter Twenty

CONCERNING FLOWERS FOR CUTTING

THERE is one aspect of gardening which I have not yet touched upon, but which is of particular interest to women, and that is the subject of cut flowers.

Where the garden is not large enough to permit growing an adequate supply of vegetables as well as enough flowers for the house and where shop flowers are expensive, it frequently pays better to buy the vegetables and grow the flowers rather than the other way round. In most gardens, however small, it is possible to grow a few rows of peas, lettuces and radishes, whilst runner beans make an attractive screen over the tool shed or bicycle shed. These vegetables are admittedly more tasty when gathered fresh from the garden rather than brought from the greengrocers, but a large area devoted to brassicas or potatoes or even the room necessary for growing parsnips and long carrots, turnips and broad beans, can be more profitably turned to account when the woman garden-owner insists on having plenty of flowers for the house.

Apart from this, most women love flowers so much that this type of gardening would, I am sure, be more welcome.

Accepting the fact for the moment that a cut-flower border, like my own, is going to be made, it is as well to devote a certain amount of space to useful perennials, which will be all the more invaluable should the annuals, for any reason, fail to come up to expectation. Along the back a light trellis may be permanently erected for sweet peas, along the front an edging of chives or carrots, most ornamental as well as useful, and this is still part of the kitchen garden. Carrot leaves are invaluable for decoration with small flowers. Garden pinks make a fine edging and also provide flowers in plenty for small vases.

At one end I have a few coarse-growing plants like Sweet

Cicely (grown for its leaves) and Pæonies. At the other end a large bush of Lavender and one of Southernwood.

The most useful perennials grown for flowers I find are Coreopsis, Oriental poppies (short-lived but gorgeous), Heleniums, Phlox, Lupins, Anemone japonica, Gaillardia, and, of course, border Chysanthemums. If there is room, a few clumps of Michaelmas daisies will be particularly suitable for vases on low tables or for pedestals on landings or hall corners. Delphiniums serve similar purpose in summer.

Plants like Gypsophila and Aster (Silver Spray) are indispensable. One or two semi-biennial plants like Stocks, Wallflowers and Sweet Williams are useful, and periodical sowings of these and Coreopsis in the nursery bed will always mean new plants coming on when these fail.

Spring bulbs may be planted round the Lavender, Southernwood and the Gypsophila, as these plants are more spreading above ground than below and help to shade the bulbs a little when they are drying off in summer.

Among these annuals my choice lies with Clarkia, Asters, Annual Larkspurs, Calendulas, and, of course, Sweet Peas. Nigella is useful both in flower and seed-vessel stage.

In between the taller perennials spaces must be left for foliage plants like Thalictrum adiantifolium, Echinops Ritro, Gillenia trifoliata, a few plants of Fennel and the silvery, cut-leaved Artemisias, also a few seeds of Oats and Barley (most useful). Nearer the front a patch of variegated grass (Phalaris Arundinaria variegata, easier to remember as "Gardener's Garters") may be planted. Spaces must be reserved for plants which will help out very considerably with the winter decoration, perennials like Eryngium, Physalis (Chinese Lanterns) Statice (some are annuals) and Honesty (a biennial). Among the annuals which are helpful in the same direction are the everlasting flowers, like Helichrysum, Rhodanthe, and Catananche.

Christmas Roses are invaluable where there is no greenhouse to supply winter flowers; but, resenting disturbance, they take some time to settle down, and their flowers should be protected from frost with a bell glass or spare frame.

The cut-flower border has big demands made upon it by the warm-hearted hostess. Knowing she is entertaining a party of friends to lunch or tea, and will probably give them a hearty send-

off laden with flowers, it is advisable to give the border a good soaking the night before if the weather is at all warm. I always cut flowers in the morning and have a pail of water by me as I cut. The flowers go straight in.

When all the flowers I intend giving away have been cut, I stand the pail on the stone floor of the scullery in the cool until the visitors are nearly ready to depart. By this time the flowers will have been standing in deep water for some hours and will have absorbed as much as they possibly can, and will arrive quite fresh at the end of their journey. This way they will last much longer than if not put in water for an hour or two after cutting.

The flowers destined for my own vases are taken out of the pail one by one, their stems are slit up with a sharp knife, and as they are done they are put straight into the vases.

In spite of being in the happy position now of growing quite a good supply of flowers myself, friends often drop in to see me, bringing with them a bunch which has been cut in their garden that morning and brought straight along. I always split up the stems of these and put them straight into a large jug filled to the brim with water (not quite cold) and leave them in the cool for some hours before finally arranging them in the vases. I have proved over and over again that it pays in the end and the flowers last much longer.

I am sure everyone at one time or another has had a bundle of limp, unhappy-looking flowers or green stuff on their hands to deal with. Either a present which has had a long journey to undergo unprepared, or the result of an afternoon's "bluebelling," or a bunch gathered during a tour round some nursery.

The most effective method to revive these, if it is possible, is to fill a big washtub with lukewarm water, split up the stems, and spreading them out in the water, leave them there for the night.

The disadvantages of this are that some flowers, particularly white ones, go quite transparent if allowed to soak for hours in water. Flowers like kingcups, on the other hand, however limp they may look on arrival, soak up water at an astonishing pace, and spend the rest of the night contorting themselves into the strangest shapes in their efforts to lift the flowers out of the water. Most of them, on being taken out of the bath the next morning, are sort of semi-circular and extremely difficult to arrange.

If a vessel of adequate area for the immersion process is not available, the bunch of flowers must be plunged up to the flower heads in water in any kind of receptacle deep enough to take the whole length of stem. The water should always have the chill off, and some people strongly recommend an aspirin dissolved in the water into the bargain.

Among the most fascinating of flowers to grow for cutting are poppies. If they are cut when the green sheaths are just beginning to split apart, and the ends of the stalks are dipped for a few seconds into boiling water directly they are cut, they will last for a long time in water while the bud and flower unfold bit by bit until fully expanded. It really is most fascinating to watch. That tip about the boiling water was given me by a prominent exhibitor of hardy flowers. Previously I had been hesitant to use poppies for important occasions in the house because of the dread that just as the door opened to admit my guests a draught of air hurrying through at a livelier pace would bring the petals scattering over the table and floor. "How can you keep your poppies whole in a hot tent like this?" I asked the exhibitor. "Do you have to gum them on before you leave home?" "Oh no," he replied, and then gave me that little bit of information which I have since made use of scores of times with great success. I have tried it, too, with various other flowers and have found it answers with those which exude a milky sap, like the euphorbias, but it does not seem to act with hollow-stemmed flowers like lupins or delphiniums.

In spite of having a water-lily pool in the garden, I cannot do without a few water-lilies floating in bowls in the house; they are so decorative. To cut from the pool, which in any case is but a small one, would spoil its beauty for the comparatively short period during which they are in flower, and so I determined to add these lilies to my cut-flower border, somehow.

For this purpose, therefore, I bought a cask and 'Erbert, with many groans, contrived to saw it in half. We burnt a handful or so of dry grass inside each tub so that whatever the tub had been used for previously would not affect the water. We heated some pitch in an old bucket, and when it was really liquid spread it over the inside and left it some weeks to soak in. A good swilling out with the hose disposed of all the surplus oil, although it made a fearful mess. Meanwhile the tubs were raised on bricks

Enough water-lilies to supply the neighborhood.

about eighteen inches off the ground. All the cracks were filled in and a hole was made in the side about nine inches from the bottom of the tub. It was then painted over twice. Meanwhile a heap of soil, two parts loam and one part cow manure, was mixed together and a layer seven inches deep was put on the bottom of the tub.

"Rare waste o' time, I calls it; could use time and labour better puttin' down a bit of lettuce or planting out a few cabbages." However, I persisted. Next a short length of gas-pipe was pushed through the hole in the side so that one end came just above the soil in the tub, while the other ended in a stout plug of wood which could be pulled in and out like a cork when required. By the time a little garden soil had been dug out it was quite possible to insert a can or bucket under the closed end of gas-pipe to receive the water from the tub on the occasions when fresh water was desirable.

The lily roots themselves were planted in loosely plaited baskets of cheap straw in a compost of two parts good soil, one part leaf-mould and one part manure. The baskets were then lowered into the water in the tub, and as eventually the basket rotted, so the expanding roots of the lilies found the rich layer of soil on the bottom of the tub. Every now and then, when the water is emptied, a little of the soil is taken off and fresh soil added, but never enough to choke the waste-pipe hole, of course. Fresh water is then supplied very slowly, to prevent disturbing the soil and making the water muddy.

This, I quite realise, is a primitive method, but it serves the purpose admirably, and I don't think anything could be very much cheaper. The raised position of the tub makes periodical paintings very easy, and it is easy to check any possible leaks immediately they occur, and it is the ideal position for cutting the blooms without any possibility of falling in. I admit the result is not highly artistic, but the tub lilies are for practical purposes only and not intended for admiration while growing.

Some people who grow lilies in this way, artistically sink the tubs in the ground, and they can be made to look delightful fringed with rock plants, or large clumps of yellow and brown Mimulus. That method removes necessity for protection in hard winters when exposed tubs may freeze through and burst.

For changing the water of these a hand-pump is usually used,

or else they are laboriously ladled out with a bucket; it is very easy to suck up much of the compost on pulling out the bucket, and the hand-pump is more to be recommended.

Lilies grow fairly fast and should be planted, and lifted and divided when necessary in April. Having only two tubs and a small pool, I am now rapidly stocking the neighbourhood with water-lilies, having firmly denied myself the creative enjoyment of adding to the number of my tubs, which would end in lily growing as a labour rather than a pleasure.

There are a few garden flowers which look delightful floating in bowls. The best of these is, of course, Love-in-a-Mist, in its own delicate green setting. Most flowers which are flattish in form are suitable for bowls, and, of course, this style of decoration does not need nearly so many flowers as large vases. In any case they are a contrast to the lavish bouquets of flowers one always hopes to have about the house.

Perennial sunflowers look well floating in a bowl, being rather the same shape as water-lilies, also Zinnias, Cosmeas, Cactus Dahlias, and Coreopsis; single flowers of Hollyhocks and Buddleia globosa together look charming in a black bowl, but only flowers with a large spread of petal and a small centre should be chosen, otherwise they sink. One of the finest flower bowls I have seen was made up of floating pansies. These flowers are always difficult to arrange because they are rather top heavy and have very short stems. This way, with their faces turned upwards to the passer-by, they can be fully appreciated.

A few suitable water-lily varieties might be in place here, although we seemed to have wandered away from the subject of lily tubs.

Nymphæa Laydeckeri Lilacea (blush) } Both-these
Nymphæa odorata sulphurea (yellow) } are scented.
Nymphæa odorata minor (white, small).
Nymphæa pygmæa alba (white).

These four are all very well worth growing and no trouble at all. Their leaves and blooms are small in comparison with the kinds usually grown in ponds, but these latter would be far too big for tub culture, and their flowers would be rather too massive for a small table decoration scheme.

Since I have advanced, at any rate, some way past the ignora-

mus stage in horticulture, some of my women friends imagine that I can solve all their gardening problems, but, sometimes, what they term problems are more like physical impossibilities. As an instance, one lady dropped in to see me carrying a notebook and pencil, and blurted out as though she was just the most reasonable person in the world: "I want you to give me a list of things I can grow so that I can keep my rooms nicely filled with cut flowers the whole year round." I knew that her entire garden occupied about sixty by twenty-five feet and that the soil was nearly as poor as sea-beach sand. When I told her that she was expecting the impossible she seemed quite hurt, and conveyed the impression that I was grudgingly withholding a very simple piece of information.

One cannot expect always to have flowers to cut, but there are certain things which, if facilities allow, may be grown to help tide over the more difficult periods.

In a sunny corner a bush of the old-fashioned laurustinus, Viburnum Tinus, to give it a proper botanical name, will give useful trusses of white flowers and pink buds with lovely green foliage at almost any time between Christmas and Easter. Against a south wall Garrya elliptica furnishes green and amber catkins between November and January. Both scarlet- and yellow-berried holly bring brightness into mid-winter days, and there are winter-flowering heathers for small or squat bowls. Iris stylosa, growing right at the foot of a south wall, where it gets well baked in summer and is never submerged by floodwater, will yield delightful blooms at the tail end of winter, and some of the crocus species will fill little finger bowls in February and March.

Polyanthuses and Forget-me-nots make a change from Daffodils in spring, and sprays of Winter Jasmine, Forsythias and the Witch Hazel, Hamamelis Mollis, do yeoman service before we may truly say "spring is here."

There is no lack of flowers throughout the period from Whitsuntide till Michaelmas, but it is when we lose the outdoor chrysanthemums and Michaelmas daisies that outdoor materials for floral decoration reach a low ebb. The Korean Chrysanthemums extend the season for a while; in normal seasons they will continue to bloom throughout October. The tall White Marguerite named Chrysanthemum uliginosum carries on for a

long time, especially if it is planted in a position where it will be cool and shaded during the heat of summer. The scarlet sprays of Schizostylis coccinea, wearing the appearance of small gladioli, will often produce flowers late in October. They are worth a little protection from wind and rain, and opening spikes will perfect development in water after cutting.

A plant I am fond of using in its season—late summer and early autumn—is the tall, large-flowered Echinacea, "The King." I have had its wine-red starry blooms fully six inches across, and they will last eight or ten days in water. But there is another point about this flower worth mentioning. It builds up in its centre a dome-shaped, bristling cone which glistens with the lustre of burnished bronze. These cones retain their beauty long after their petals have withered. By cleaning off the dead petals and the shrivelled leaves from the stalks these shining bronze knobs make really effective material for vases well into winter. Plumes of pampas grass go well with them in a big drain-pipe stand on the staircase landing where beams of light from a window shine across them.

Chapter Twenty-One

THE IMPORTANCE OF CLIMBING PLANTS

WHENEVER I visit friends who ask me to look round their gardens, and often when I am running through towns and villages in the car, I am greatly surprised to find how seldom fences and the sides of sheds and outbuildings, often close to the house, are utilised to support some of the exquisite creepers and climbers which are so easily and cheaply obtainable and may be made lovely features with no trouble beyond that of a reasonable amount of training in the way they should go.

The range of climbing plants available is wide enough to supply something good for practically every need, but not always is the choice as wise at it might be, for there are some plants which are eminently suited to prim and restricted training which is quite appropriate for the narrow spaces of wall between the windows and doorways of dwellings, and there are others which will be totally unsuitable for these positions but are really beautiful where they can ramp, with a considerable degree of unrestrained liberty, over a rustic fence or even up the sides and over the roof of a garden shed.

Besides the necessity to study the character of the supports upon which the plants are to climb it is essential to pay some regard to aspect and also to the character of the soil in which the roots must run. Lovers of roses will make all possible use of wall and fence space as well as arches and pergolas for the accommodation of either the proper climbers or the ramblers of polyantha or wichuraiana origin, but in order that these may really thrive they should have a root run in soil of substantial and somewhat heavy character. Where one's soil is more in the nature of stony gravel there are many things that will prosper more happily than roses. Here, use should be made of such things as escallonias, forsythias, Polygonum baldschuanicum, the

jasmines, pyracantha and ceanothus. All of these will do best where the soil is open, porous and inclined always to be warm rather than cool as a clay soil is.

The clematis family embraces a wide range of varieties both in regard to size and colouring of the blooms, and the season of flowering. The late blooming Jackmanni tribe is familiar to most in its rich violet and purple varieties with large Maltese Cross sort of flowers. Plants of this kind are most frequently seen trailing up house walls and over door porches. The one pity is that in a large percentage of cases these plants have been allowed to grow with unhindered freedom, with the result that all the lower part of the wall space shows nothing but bare stems while up above is a tousled mass of foliage, half of which would have been better removed, enabling the rest to develop to full strength, bearing an abundance of sumptuous and richly coloured blossoms of good size and lasting substance.

Quite early in the year the varieties of Clematis montana provide their prodigious display of blossom. In the normal type they are white, individually small cross-shaped flowers, but in the mass they make sheets of attractive purity. There are tinted varieties of Clematis montana and some hybrid forms with larger flowers in colours ranging from white to rosy pink and magenta purple.

Between these two widely separated seasonal groups there is a large number of varieties, many of which have huge, beautifully coloured flowers, both single and double. The most attractive of these belong to what is known as the lanuginosa group. These, too, are often used for wall covering, but they are equally, if not more, effective when used on pergolas or other rustic supports.

All kinds of clematis like to have their roots in cool, rich, deep and moisture-holding soil so long as they are not subjected to stagnant water. They like some lime in their root run, and thoroughly appreciate the richness of old, decomposed manure and such nourishing fertilisers as bonemeal, hoof and horn, fishmeal, etc.

There are one or two points about establishing clematis that should be duly observed. First, their most vulnerable point is the base of the stem approximating to the junction of the grafted variety with the stock root. The common practice of turning a plant out of its pot and just burying the roots in the soil in-

volves a great risk, because if the situation is in full sunshine—and it certainly is an advantage that the foliage and flowers shall be bathed in sunlight—there is always a likelihood of that vulnerable point being scorched or baked during a spell of really hot summer weather. This has caused in vast numbers of cases the sudden collapse of what had, up to a point, appeared to be a beautiful flourishing plant. The best means of obviating this trouble is to open out a hole for the roots of the plant about eighteen inches from the base of its wall or fence. From that hole to the foot of the support open out a narrow trough, not more than three inches deep, and allow the lower part of the stem of the plant to lie along this trough, to be covered with rich but porous soil. The effect of this method of planting is to enable the plant to make roots all along the buried part of its stem, and eventually the clematis will become established on its own roots and will be rendered practically independent of the stock root upon which it was grafted. When once a clematis has thus been established it will grow away with amazing vigour and perfect safety.

Another detail, lack of knowledge of which has been disastrous to many hundreds and probably thousands of plants, is the necessity to adopt a method of pruning according to the class to which the clematis belongs. All the plants of the Jackmanni group flower best on young growths. For this reason it pays to prune back any Jackmanni variety sufficient to remove almost all the branches which bore blossoms during the previous season. If this pruning is done about February the young growth issuing from near the base of the plant will be stronger, stouter and more vigorous that the growths of the previous year, and there will be the further advantage that the lower part of the wall or other support will be furnished with stems and foliage whilst the blossoms will be more or less evenly distributed over the whole area covered by the plant. If such pruning is neglected the result is the tousled overcrowded growth at the top already referred to, and eventually the lower stems will become so coarse and hardened that it will be almost an impossibility again to get the lower area covered by foliage.

To treat the varieties of the lanuginosa group in the same fashion would be a great mistake, because their blossoms are produced on lateral shoots from permanent main stems. To

prune these properly, therefore, one should simply shorten back the growths of the previous season, leaving all the main branches uncut.

The montana section is different again. These require no other pruning than thinning out of growths where they show evident signs of overcrowding. Clematis montana is a plant that needs unlimited head room. In the course of time one plant will extend itself over an enormous amount of space if its branches are trained and secured in such a manner that they can grow away unhampered, but if all their new shoots are left they become far too crowded to enable a fair percentage to develop sufficient strength to flower. Their pruning, therefore, amounts to judicious thinning and leading in the way they should go rather than drastic cutting out of strong growths.

Where big, high walls have to be covered the ornamental vines should receive far more attention than is usually bestowed upon them. There are many kinds of these decorative vines, most of which have ample foliage which is beautifully green in summer and gorgeously bathed in autumn tints of vivid scarlet, flaming orange, delicate amber and glittering bronze. There are a few varieties which are apt to be badly injured by winter and spring frosts. Such should only be planted in favoured localities of the South and West of England, but a good many are hardy enough to stand the climate of almost all parts of the British Isles. The catalogues of tree and shrub specialists will serve to guide garden owners in the choice of suitable varieties for their own particular needs.

Among ivies there are some wonderfully beautiful climbers which are hardy enough to stand the bleakest exposure of a north-east garden. Some have huge leaves, others tiny, beautifully scalloped or crimpled foliage. Some are green, some variegated, some exceedingly rampant and others slow in growth. It is not everybody who likes to have ivy covering the walls of their dwellings, but even so there are usually outhouses or ugly fences that will offer convenient and adequate support for some kind of ivy, and the beauty of these plants is to be fully appreciated in the depth of winter when most other things are bare and uninteresting.

The escallonias are particularly suitable for planting in gardens near the sea coast. They are evergreen and they bear little trusses

of charmingly pretty flowers. The majority grow freely enough to make a complete curtain of foliage and flowers for walls of the average height of a house, and it is another advantage that if any branch tends to outrun required limits it may be cut back without hesitation, the plants being good enough to withstand such curbing of their energies without detriment.

In warm places where there are high walls, owners may enjoy the luxury of one or other of the magnificent magnolias. Those who delight to have something out of the ordinary may plant Solanum crispum, a climbing member of the same family as that to which the potato belongs. Along the south coast fuchsias cover many walls and are a dream of grace and beauty all through the summer.

For walls that are only five to six feet high either the single or double form of Kerria japonica may well be recommended. This plant also will serve to shield many an otherwise ugly fence dividing one's garden from neighbouring holdings.

There are many other climbers and numbers of wall shrubs all of which are well worth growing, but it would require a volume to itself to deal in detail with them all.

The one thing that should be realised at the outset is that a climbing plant is placed in its position for permanency, and, since it has to support a great area of stem and foliage growth as well as in most cases be expected to supply an abundance of blossoms, it should be realised that it is of paramount importance that before planting an adequate root run should be prepared and thoroughly well nourished. Often it happens that a pathway must run close by the roots of a wall climber. It is utter folly simply to dig out a hole the size of a bucket and put in a plant expecting it to thrive and support growth ten or twenty feet long. Before the path is made at least a cubic yard of soil should be disturbed, a good layer of drainage being placed in the bottom, covering with some good fibrous turf and nourishing manure. As the body of soil is being returned it should be well dressed with bonemeal, hoof and horn, and if possible some good substantial farmyard manure. In many cases some lime rubble will be an advantage, but there are a few climbers, as well as other kinds of plants, that do not like lime. One should ascertain in advance of planting which these are and adapt their preparation of rooting material accordingly. When once the roots have access

to a well-nourished medium of this kind it is no great disadvantage to them to be covered by a path or even paving stones, but of course some provision must be made for moisture to reach the roots, and I have found in some cases, especially where a broad area of paving is contemplated, it is a big advantage to sink some drain-pipes vertically into the soil, covering these with movable wooden caps so that they may, when occasion arises, be opened out to be repeatedly filled with water so long as it drains readily away, stopping only when the water remains stationary in the pipes.

Chapter Twenty-Two

ENVIRONMENT AND GARDEN CHARACTER

AT last, my garden really looks a picture, but last year something dawned upon me which I can only describe as a startling and surprising thing which grew in importance very slowly, but nevertheless very persistently, until at last it forced me to spend quite a large sum of money I never intended spending at all.

My garden is surrounded by country, meaning in this case a large field on one side and a stretch of rough grass dotted with wild flowers running up to a wood on the other side and across the bottom. Having gazed at my little plot from my window and watched its patches of colour increase until it at last became a picture full of varied shades and tints and bounded by the fence, I began to realise that the more colourful it became the more unnatural it looked owing to its sober, natural surroundings.

This gave me rather a shock, as I had spent nearly three years in making what I thought was a natural garden. There was no doubt about it, however; the more I looked from the window the more disquieting it became. All I could do was to take down one side fence and the bottom fence and buy the grass and wild flowers up to and including the fringe of the wood.

Herbert and I took it in turns roughly to rake the grass and shorten it with a hook. All the bold groups of wild flowers like the ragwort, foxgloves, comfrey and two most exquisite specimens of white bryony and bitter-sweet were left standing (very hot arguments with Herbert, and I felt like a guardian angel with drawn sword) and two winding paths were roughly marked out leading to the wood and were afterwards kept roughly mown. The next winter I planned the piece as a semi-wild garden. (There was a good deal of running up and down stairs to do this with Herbert holding a white stick and planting it more or less

where my frantic wavings from the window indicated.) The grass is now a carpet for groups of Cistus ladaniferous and laurifolius, Azaleas, Tree Lupins, Brooms, Phlomis fruticosa, Eryngium giganteum (teazle), Lavender Cotton, Hedge beech, Silver Birch and (close to the wood) a group of Rhododendrons, and one of Philadelphus with low banks of ferns and anemones between.

Nearly all the grass is planted up with huge drifts of spring bulbs, and for the early autumn some careful plantings of Helianthus and Aster "King of the Belgians." For foliage plants a few scattered specimens of Fennel, Myosotis odorata (Sweet Cicely), Seakale, Rhubarb and Polygonum chinense. Now when I gaze out of the upper window I see the garden linked in a natural way to the farther woods and, strangely enough, this semi-wild plantation seems to make the garden itself less artificial.

This has made me observe other peoples' gardens in a new light, and the modern craze for buying a piece of land, cutting down all the trees or destroying any existing natural feature before even the house is built makes it so much more difficult for the tenant to produce a natural-looking garden.

The result is usually a collection of plants crowded together in a fenced area like birds in a cage and looking about as unnatural.

If no natural features exist in the garden the first thing to do is to make a few, and quickly plant a few trees remarkable for beauty of *form*—a flowering cherry, a silver birch, a Scots pine—and these should roughly be the focussing point.

In the same way when planting up the shubbery, the foliage outline is of as much importance as the autumn colouring or the flowers, and care should be taken to see that one enhances the different beauty of the other.

The severity of modern architecture is making the garden designer realise the importance of natural simplicity, and from the woman's point of view, with her usual love of colour, this severity seems to her to go to the other extreme on occasions when a large garden consists mainly of wide stretches of grass with a few bare boulders appearing through the surface.

It may be also the atmosphere of rush and crowd which constitutes life as it is to-day which is influencing garden design from multiple beds and close-crowded borders to something simpler

and more spacious and in a way more restful. Nevertheless the universal tendency of builders to destroy all existing natural features before the future tenant has even seen the place has nothing to recommend it from any point of view. It should be left to the future tenant to decide what shall be retained and what destroyed.

With regard to the medium or small garden, therefore, the woman-owner should not let her enthusiasm for flowers over-rule her sense of artistic proportion (a sense to be kept in constant practice and exercised in everyday routine).

She should spend her time striving, by considered alteration and careful planting, to produce a complete and well-balanced picture, but if she has even a touch of the natural artist in her she will never be satisfied with the result, but will always be altering and re-creating.

This permanent dissatisfaction is, of course, the whole astonishing charm and interest of gardening. It would be a mournful day upon which a garden lover was forced to realise that finality had been reached and that further alteration must never be made. Happily, there seems to be no sound reason why that should ever happen, for there is always an excuse, if not a very sound reason, for making changes, even in what rude people call "pocket-handkerchief gardens." Of course, those who follow the soundest advice of all the experts who insist that making a garden should never be a hurried operation will be longer in reaching the time when their dream gardens become realities, and when that is at last an accomplished fact there will be neither inclination nor necessity to make changes, but who, having taken possession of a house and piece of ground, is going to be patient enough to go slowly and do things by such easy stages that it takes years to evolve a garden that shall be faultless? Who, indeed; it will not be many among the women I happen to know. The majority of them are sorely taxed to wait while seeds of Nasturtium or Mignonette come up, and they want a lawn in a month.

As a D.Sc. once said to me: "The more you know, the more you will know how little you know." A thirst for experiment and the unexpectedness of results obtained most frequently may be regarded among the many fascinations of really good gardening.